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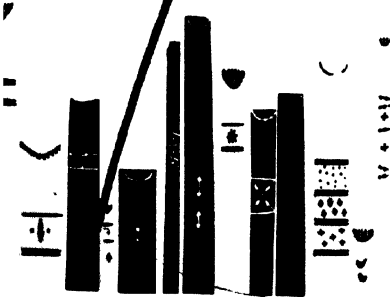
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The excursion: a poem

1847.





THE  
EXCURSION;

A Poem.

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

A NEW EDITION



LONDON:  
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TO  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
WILLIAM, EARL OF LONSDALE, K.G.  
&c. &c.

---

OFt, through thy fair domains, illustrious Peer!  
In youth I roamed, on youthful pleasures bent;  
And mused in rocky cell or sylvan tent,  
Beside swift-flowing Lowther's current clear.  
—Now, by thy care befriended, I appear  
Before thee, LONSDALE, and this Work present,  
A token (may it prove a monument!)  
Of high respect and gratitude sincere.  
Gladly would I have waited till my task  
Had reached its close; but Life is insecure,  
And Hope full oft fallacious as a dream.  
Therefore, for what is here produced, I ask  
Thy favour; trusting that thou wilt not deem  
The Offering, though imperfect, premature.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

RYDAL MOUNT, WESTMORELAND,

*July 29, 1814.*



## P R E F A C E.



THE Title-page announces that this is only a portion of a poem; and the Reader must be here apprised that it belongs to the second part of a long and laborious Work, which is to consist of three parts.—The Author will candidly acknowledge that, if the first of these had been completed, and in such a manner as to satisfy his own mind, he should have preferred the natural order of publication, and have given that to the world first; but, as the second division of the Work was designed to refer more to passing events, and to an existing state of things, than the others were meant to do, more continuous exertion was naturally bestowed upon it, and greater progress made here than in the rest of the poem; and as this part does not depend upon the preceding, to a degree which will materially injure its own peculiar interest, the Author, complying with the earnest entreaties of some valued Friends, presents the following pages to the Public.

It may be proper to state whence the poem, of which The Excursion is a part, derives its Title of THE

RECLUSE.—Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary Work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them. That Work, addressed to a dear Friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the Author's Intellect is deeply indebted, has been long finished; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it was a determination to compose a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society; and to be entitled, *The Recluse*; as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement.—The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself; and the two Works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the ante-chapel has to the body of a gothic church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor Pieces, which have been long before the Public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive Reader to have such connection with the main Work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, ora-

tories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices.

The Author would not have deemed himself justified in saying, upon this occasion, so much of performances either unfinished, or unpublished, if he had not thought that the labour bestowed by him upon what he has heretofore and now laid before the Public, entitled him to candid attention for such a statement as he thinks necessary to throw light upon his endeavours to please and, he would hope, to benefit his countrymen.—Nothing further need be added, than that the first and third parts of *The Recluse* will consist chiefly of meditations in the Author's own person; and that in the intermediate part (*The Excursion*) the intervention of characters speaking is employed, and something of a dramatic form adopted.

It is not the Author's intention formally to announce a system: it was more animating to him to proceed in a different course; and if he shall succeed in conveying to the mind clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings, the Reader will have no difficulty in extracting the system for himself. And in the mean time the following passage, taken from the conclusion of the first book of *The Recluse*, may be acceptable as a kind of *Prospectus* of the design and scope of the whole Poem.

*' On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,  
Musing in solitude, I oft perceive  
Fair trains of imagery before me rise,  
Accompanied by feelings of delight  
Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;  
And I am conscious of affecting thoughts*

*And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes  
 Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh  
 The good and evil of our mortal state.  
 —To these emotions, whencesoe'er they come,  
 Whether from breath of outward circumstance,  
 Or from the Soul—an impulse to herself—  
 I would give utterance in numerous verse.  
 Of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love, and Hope,  
 And melancholy Fear subdued by Faith ;  
 Of blessed consolations in distress ;  
 Of moral strength, and intellectual Power ;  
 Of joy in widest commonalty spread ;  
 Of the individual Mind that keeps her own  
 Inviolable retirement, subject there  
 To Conscience only, and the law supreme  
 Of that Intelligence which governs all—  
 I sing :—‘ fit audience let me find though few !’*

*So prayed, more gaining than he asked, the Bard,  
 Holiest of Men.—Urania, I shall need  
 Thy guidance, or a greater Muse, if such  
 Descend to earth or dwell in highest heaven !  
 For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink  
 Deep—and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds  
 To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.  
 All strength—all terror, single or in bands,  
 That ever was put forth in personal form—  
 Jehovah—with his thunder, and the choir  
 Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones—  
 I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not  
 The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,  
 Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out  
 By help of dreams—can breed such fear and awe  
 As fall upon us often when we look  
 Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man—  
 My haunt, and the main region of my song.  
 —Beauty—a living Presence of the earth,*



*Surpassing the most fair ideal Forms  
Which craft of delicate Spirits hath composed  
From earth's materials—waits upon my steps ;  
Pitches her tents before me as I move,  
An hourly neighbour. Paradise, and groves  
Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old  
Sought in the Atlantic Main—why should they be  
A history only of departed things,  
Or a mere fiction of what never was ?  
For the discerning intellect of Man,  
When wedded to this goodly universe  
In love and holy passion, shall find these  
A simple produce of the common day.  
—I, long before the blissful hour arrives,  
Would chant, in lonely peace, the spousal verse  
Of this great consummation :—and, by words  
Which speak of nothing more than what we are,  
Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep  
Of Death, and win the vacant and the vain  
To noble raptures ; while my voice proclaims  
How exquisitely the individual Mind  
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less  
Of the whole species) to the external World  
Is fitted :—and how exquisitely, too—  
Theme this but little heard of among men—  
The external World is fitted to the Mind ;  
And the creation (by no lower name  
Can it be called) which they with blended might  
Accomplish :—this is our high argument.  
—Such grateful haunts foregoing, if I oft  
Must turn elsewhere—to travel near the tribes  
And fellowships of men, and see ill sights  
Of madding passions mutually inflamed ;  
Must hear Humanity in fields and groves  
Pipe solitary anguish ; or must hang  
Brooding above the fierce confederate storm  
Of sorrow, barricadoed evermore*

*Within the walls of cities—may these sounds  
Have their authentic comment ; that even these  
Hearing, I be not downcast or forlorn !  
Descend, prophetic Spirit ! that inspir'st  
The human Soul of universal earth,  
Dreaming on things to come ; and dost possess  
A metropolitan temple in the hearts  
Of mighty Poets : upon me bestow  
A gift of genuine insight ; that my Song  
With star-like virtue in its place may shine,  
Shedding benignant influence, and secure  
Itself, from all malevolent effect  
Of those mutations that extend their sway  
Throughout the nether sphere !—And if with this  
I mix more lowly matter ; with the thing  
Contemplated, describe the Mind and Man  
Contemplating ; and who, and what he was—  
The transitory Being that beheld  
This Vision ; when and where, and how he lived ;—  
Be not this labour useless. If such theme  
May sort with highest objects, then—dread Power !  
Whose gracious favour is the primal source  
Of all illumination—may my Life  
Express the image of a better time,  
More wise desires, and simpler manners ;—nurse  
My Heart in genuine freedom :—all pure thoughts  
Be with me ;—so shall thy unfailing love  
Guide, and support, and cheer me to the end !'*

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# THE EXCURSION.

— — — — —

## BOOK I.

### THE WANDERER.

## ARGUMENT.

PAGE 3, A summer forenoon.—4, The Author reaches a ruined Cottage upon a Common, and there meets with a revered Friend, the Wanderer, of whose education and course of life he gives an account.—21, The Wanderer, while resting under the shade of the Trees that surround the Cottage, relates the History of its last Inhabitant.

## BOOK FIRST.

---

### THE WANDERER.

---

'Twas summer, and the sun had mounted high :  
Southward the landscape indistinctly glared  
Through a pale steam ; but all the northern downs,  
In clearest air ascending, showed far off  
A surface dappled o'er with shadows flung  
From brooding clouds ; shadows that lay in spots  
Determined and unmoved, with steady beams  
Of bright and pleasant sunshine interposed ;  
Pleasant to him who on the soft cool moss  
Extends his careless limbs along the front  
Of some huge cave, whose rocky ceiling casts  
A twilight of its own, an ample shade,  
Where the wren warbles, while the dreaming man,  
Half conscious of the soothing melody,  
With side-long eye looks out upon the scene,  
By power of that impending covert thrown  
To finer distance. Other lot was mine ;

Yet with good hope that soon I should obtain  
As grateful resting-place, and livelier joy.  
Across a bare wide Common I was toiling  
With languid steps that by the slippery ground  
Were baffled ; nor could my weak arm disperse  
The host of insects gathering round my face,  
And ever with me as I paced along.

Upon that open level stood a grove,  
The wished-for port to which my course was bound.  
Thither I came, and there, amid the gloom  
Spread by a brotherhood of lofty elms,  
Appeared a roofless Hut ; four naked walls  
That stared upon each other !—I looked round,  
And to my wish and to my hope espied  
Him whom I sought ; a Man of reverend age,  
But stout and hale, for travel unimpaired.  
There was he seen upon the cottage-bench,  
Recumbent in the shade, as if asleep ;  
An iron-pointed staff lay at his side.

Him had I marked the day before—alone  
And stationed in the public way, with face  
Turned toward the sun then setting, while that staff  
Afforded to the figure of the man  
Detained for contemplation or repose,  
Graceful support ; his countenance meanwhile  
Was hidden from my view, and he remained  
Unrecognised ; but, stricken by the sight,



With slackened footsteps I advanced, and soon  
A glad congratulation we exchanged  
At such unthought-of meeting.— For the night  
We parted, nothing willingly ; and now  
He by appointment waited for me here,  
Beneath the shelter of these clustering elms.

We were tried Friends : amid a pleasant vale,  
In the antique market-village where were passed  
My school-days, an apartment he had owned,  
To which at intervals the Wanderer drew,  
And found a kind of home or harbour there.  
He loved me ; from a swarm of rosy boys  
Singled out me, as he in sport would say,  
For my grave looks, too thoughtful for my years.  
As I grew up, it was my best delight  
To be his chosen comrade. Many a time,  
On holidays, we rambled through the woods :  
We sate—we walked ; he pleased me with report  
Of things which he had seen ; and often touched  
Abstrusest matter, reasonings of the mind  
Turned inward ; or at my request would sing  
Old songs, the product of his native hills ;  
A skilful distribution of sweet sounds,  
Feeding the soul, and eagerly imbibed  
As cool refreshing water, by the care  
Of the industrious husbandman, diffused  
Through a parched meadow-ground, in time of drought.  
Still deeper welcome found his pure discourse :

How precious when in riper days I learned  
To weigh with care his words, and to rejoice  
In the plain presence of his dignity !

Oh ! many are the Poets that are sown  
By Nature ; men endowed with highest gifts,  
The vision and the faculty divine ;  
Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse,  
(Which, in the docile season of their youth,  
It was denied them to acquire, through lack  
Of culture and the inspiring aid of books,  
Or haply by a temper too severe,  
Or a nice backwardness afraid of shame)  
Nor having e'er, as life advanced, been led  
By circumstance to take unto the height  
The measure of themselves, these favoured Beings,  
All but a scattered few, live out their time,  
Husbanding that which they possess within,  
And go to the grave, unthought of. Strongest minds  
Are often those of whom the noisy world  
Hears least ; else surely this Man had not left  
His graces unrevealed and unproclaimed.  
But, as the mind was filled with inward light,  
So not without distinction had he lived,  
Beloved and honoured—far as he was known.  
And some small portion of his eloquent speech,  
And something that may serve to set in view  
The feeling pleasures of his loneliness,  
His observations, and the thoughts his mind

Had dealt with—I will here record in verse ;  
Which, if with truth it correspond, and sink  
Or rise as venerable Nature leads,  
The high and tender Muses shall accept  
With gracious smile, deliberately pleased,  
And listening Time reward with sacred praise.

Among the hills of Athol he was born ;  
Where, on a small hereditary farm,  
An unproductive slip of rugged ground,  
His Parents, with their numerous offspring, dwelt ;  
A virtuous household, though exceeding poor !  
Pure livers were they all, austere and grave,  
And fearing God ; the very children taught  
Stern self-respect, a reverence for God's word,  
And an habitual piety, maintained  
With strictness scarcely known on English ground.

From his sixth year, the Boy of whom I speak,  
In summer, tended cattle on the hills ;  
But, through the inclement and the perilous days  
Of long-continuing winter, he repaired,  
Equipped with satchel, to a school, that stood  
Sole building on a mountain's dreary edge,  
Remote from view of city spire, or sound  
Of minster clock ! From that bleak tenement  
He, many an evening, to his distant home  
In solitude returning, saw the hills  
Grow larger in the darkness, all alone

Beheld the stars come out above his head,  
And travelled through the wood, with no one near  
To whom he might confess the things he saw.

So the foundations of his mind were laid.  
In such communion, not from terror free,  
While yet a child, and long before his time,  
Had he perceived the presence and the power  
Of greatness ; and deep feelings had impressed  
Great objects on his mind, with portraiture  
And colour so distinct, that on his mind  
They lay like substances, and almost seemed  
To haunt the bodily sense. He had received  
A precious gift ; for, as he grew in years,  
With these impressions would he still compare  
All his remembrances, thoughts, shapes, and forms ;  
And, being still unsatisfied with aught  
Of dimmer character, he thence attained  
An active power to fasten images  
Upon his brain ; and on their pictured lines  
Intensely brooded, even till they acquired  
The liveliness of dreams. Nor did he fail,  
While yet a child, with a child's eagerness  
Incessantly to turn his ear and eye  
On all things which the moving seasons brought  
To feed such appetite : nor this alone  
Appeased his yearning :—in the after day  
Of boyhood, many an hour in caves forlorn,  
And 'mid the hollow depths of naked crags

He sate, and even in their fixed lineaments,  
Or from the power of a peculiar eye,  
Or by creative feeling overborne,  
Or by predominance of thought oppressed,  
Even in their fixed and steady lineaments  
He traced an ebbing and a flowing mind,  
Expression ever varying !

Thus informed,  
He had small need of books ; for many a tale  
Traditionary, round the mountains hung,  
And many a legend, peopling the dark woods,  
Nourished Imagination in her growth,  
And gave the Mind that apprehensive power  
By which she is made quick to recognise  
The moral properties and scope of things.  
But eagerly he read, and read again,  
Whate'er the minister's old shelf supplied ;  
The life and death of martyrs, who sustained,  
With will inflexible, those fearful pangs  
Triumphantly displayed in records left  
Of persecution, and the Covenant—times  
Whose echo rings through Scotland to this hour !  
And there, by lucky hap, had been preserved  
A straggling volume, torn and incomplete,  
That left half-told the preternatural tale,  
Romance of giants, chronicle of fiends,  
Profuse in garniture of wooden cuts  
Strange and uncouth ; dire faces, figures dire,  
Sharp-kneed, sharp-elbowed, and lean-ankled too,

Wisdom, which works thro' patience ; thence he learned  
In oft-recurring hours of sober thought  
To look on Nature with a humble heart,  
Self-questioned where it did not understand,  
And with a superstitious eye of love.

So passed the time ; yet to the nearest town  
He duly went with what small overplus  
His earnings might supply, and brought away  
The book that most had tempted his desires  
While at the stall he read. Among the hills  
He gazed upon that mighty orb of song,  
The divine Milton. Lore of different kind,  
The annual savings of a toilsome life,  
His School-master supplied ; books that explain  
The purer elements of truth involved  
In lines and numbers, and, by charm severe,  
(Especially perceived where nature droops  
And feeling is suppressed) preserve the mind  
Busy in solitude and poverty.  
These occupations oftentimes deceived  
The listless hours, while in the hollow vale,  
Hollow and green, he lay on the green turf  
In pensive idleness. What could he do,  
Thus daily thirsting, in that lonesome life,  
With blind endeavours ? Yet, still uppermost,  
Nature was at his heart as if he felt,  
Though yet he knew not how, a wasting power  
In all things that from her sweet influence

Might tend to wean him. Therefore with her hues,  
Her forms, and with the spirit of her forms,  
He clothed the nakedness of austere truth.  
While yet he lingered in the rudiments  
Of science, and among her simplest laws,  
His triangles—they were the stars of heaven,  
The silent stars! Oft did he take delight  
To measure the altitude of some tall crag  
That is the eagle's birth-place, or some peak  
Familiar with forgotten years, that shows  
Inscribed, as with the silence of the thought,  
Upon its bleak and visionary sides,  
The history of many a winter storm,  
Or obscure records of the path of fire.

And thus before his eighteenth year was told,  
Accumulated feelings pressed his heart  
With still increasing weight; he was o'erpowered  
By Nature, by the turbulence subdued  
Of his own mind; by mystery and hope,  
And the first virgin passion of a soul  
Communing with the glorious universe.  
Full often wished he that the winds might rage  
When they were silent: far more fondly now  
Than in his earlier season did he love  
Tempestuous nights—the conflict and the sounds  
That live in darkness. From his intellect  
And from the stillness of abstracted thought  
He asked repose; and, failing oft to win

The peace required, he scanned the laws of light  
Amid the roar of torrents, where they send  
From hollow clefts up to the clearer air  
A cloud of mist, that smitten by the sun  
Varies its rainbow hues. But vainly thus,  
And vainly by all other means, he strove  
To mitigate the fever of his heart.

In dreams, in study, and in ardent thought,  
Thus was he reared ; much wanting to assist  
The growth of intellect, yet gaining more,  
And every moral feeling of his soul  
Strengthened and braced, by breathing in content  
The keen, the wholesome, air of poverty,  
And drinking from the well of homely life.  
—But, from past liberty, and tried restraints,  
He now was summoned to select the course  
Of humble industry that promised best  
To yield him no unworthy maintenance.  
Urged by his Mother, he essayed to teach  
A village-school—but wandering thoughts were then  
A misery to him ; and the Youth resigned  
A task he was unable to perform.

That stern yet kindly Spirit, who constrains  
The Savoyard to quit his naked rocks,  
The free-born Swiss to leave his narrow vales,  
(Spirit attached to regions mountainous  
Like their own steadfast clouds) did now impel



His restless mind to look abroad with hope.  
—An irksome drudgery seems it to plod on,  
Through hot and dusty ways, or pelting storm,  
A vagrant Merchant under a heavy load  
Bent as he moves, and needing frequent rest ;  
Yet do such travellers find their own delight ;  
And their hard service, deemed debasing now,  
Gained merited respect in simpler times ;  
When squire, and priest, and they who round them dwelt  
In rustic sequestration—all dependent  
Upon the PEDLAR'S toil—supplied their wants,  
Or pleased their fancies with the wares he brought.  
Not ignorant was the Youth that still no few  
Of his adventurous countrymen were led  
By perseverance in this track of life  
To competence and ease ;—for him it bore  
Attractions manifold ;—and this he chose.  
—His Parents on the enterprise bestowed  
Their farewell benediction, but with hearts  
Foreboding evil. From his native hills  
He wandered far ; much did he see of men,  
Their manners, their enjoyments, and pursuits,  
Their passions and their feelings ; chiefly those  
Essential and eternal in the heart,  
That, 'mid the simpler forms of rural life,  
Exist more simple in their elements,  
And speak a plainer language. In the woods,  
A lone Enthusiast, and among the fields,  
Itinerant in this labour, he had passed

The better portion of his time ; and there  
Spontaneously had his affections thriven  
Amid the bounties of the year, the peace  
And liberty of nature ; there he kept  
In solitude and solitary thought  
His mind in a just equipoise of love.  
Serene it was, unclouded by the cares  
Of ordinary life ; unvexed, unwarped  
By partial bondage. In his steady course,  
No piteous revolutions had he felt,  
No wild varieties of joy and grief.  
Unoccupied by sorrow of its own,  
His heart lay open ; and, by nature tuned  
And constant disposition of his thoughts  
To sympathy with man, he was alive  
To all that was enjoyed where'er he went,  
And all that was endured ; for in himself  
Happy, and quiet in his cheerfulness,  
He had no painful pressure from without  
That made him turn aside from wretchedness  
With coward fears. He could *afford* to suffer  
With those whom he saw suffer. Hence it came  
That in our best experience he was rich,  
And in the wisdom of our daily life.  
For hence, minutely, in his various rounds,  
He had observed the progress and decay  
Of many minds, of minds and bodies too ;  
The history of many families ;  
How they had prospered ; how they were o'erthrown

By passion or mischance ; or such misrule  
Among the unthinking masters of the earth  
As makes the nations groan.

This active course

He followed till provision for his wants  
Had been obtained ;—the Wanderer then resolved  
To pass the remnant of his days, untasked  
With needless services, from hardship free.  
His calling laid aside, he lived at ease :  
But still he loved to pace the public roads  
And the wild paths ; and, by the summer's warmth  
Invited, often would he leave his home  
And journey far, revisiting the scenes  
That to his memory were most endeared.  
—Vigorous in health, of hopeful spirits, undamped  
By worldly-mindedness or anxious care ;  
Observant, studious, thoughtful, and refreshed  
By knowledge gathered up from day to day ;  
Thus had he lived a long and innocent life.

The Scottish Church, both on himself and those  
With whom from childhood he grew up, had held  
The strong hand of her purity ; and still  
Had watched him with an unrelenting eye.  
This he remembered in his riper age  
With gratitude, and reverential thoughts.  
But by the native vigour of his mind,  
By his habitual wanderings out of doors,  
By loneliness, and goodness, and kind works,

Whate'er, in docile childhood or in youth,  
He had imbibed of fear or darker thought  
Was melted all away ; so true was this,  
That sometimes his religion seemed to me  
Self-taught, as of a dreamer in the woods ;  
Who to the model of his own pure heart  
Shaped his belief, as grace divine inspired,  
And human reason dictated with awe.  
—And surely never did there live on earth  
A man of kindlier nature. The rough sports  
And teasing ways of children vexed not him ;  
Indulgent listener was he to the tongue  
Of garrulous age ; nor did the sick man's tale,  
To his fraternal sympathy addressed,  
Obtain reluctant hearing.

Plain his garb ;

Such as might suit a rustic Sire, prepared  
For sabbath duties ; yet he was a man  
Whom no one could have passed without remark.  
Active and nervous was his gait ; his limbs  
And his whole figure breathed intelligence.  
Time had compressed the freshness of his cheek  
Into a narrower circle of deep red,  
But had not tamed his eye ; that, under brows  
Shaggy and grey, had meanings which it brought  
From years of youth ; which, like a Being made  
Of many Beings, he had wondrous skill  
To blend with knowledge of the years to come,  
Human, or such as lie beyond the grave.

---

So was He framed ; and such his course of life  
Who now, with no appendage but a staff,  
The prized memorial of relinquished toils,  
Upon that cottage-bench reposed his limbs,  
Screened from the sun. Supine the Wanderer lay,  
His eyes as if in drowsiness half shut,  
The shadows of the breezy elms above  
Dappling his face. He had not heard the sound  
Of my approaching steps, and in the shade  
Unnoticed did I stand, some minutes' space.  
At length I hailed him, seeing that his hat  
Was moist with water-drops, as if the brim  
Had newly scooped a running stream. He rose,  
And ere our lively greeting into peace  
Had settled, " 'Tis," said I, " a burning day :  
My lips are parched with thirst, but you, it seems,  
Have somewhere found relief." He, at the word,  
Pointing towards a sweet-briar, bade me climb  
The fence where that aspiring shrub looked out  
Upon the public way. It was a plot  
Of garden ground run wild, its matted weeds  
Marked with the steps of those, whom, as they passed,  
The gooseberry trees that shot in long lank slips,  
Or currants, hanging from their leafless stems,  
In scanty strings, had tempted to o'erleap  
The broken wall. I looked around, and there,  
Where two tall hedge-rows of thick alder boughs  
Joined in a cold damp nook, espied a well  
Shrouded with willow-flowers and plummy fern.

My thirst I slaked, and from the cheerless spot  
Withdrawing, straightway to the shade returned  
Where sate the old Man on the cottage-bench ;  
And, while, beside him, with uncovered head,  
I yet was standing, freely to respire,  
And cool my temples in the fanning air,  
Thus did he speak. " I see around me here  
Things which you cannot see : we die, my Friend,  
Nor we alone, but that which each man loved  
And prized in his peculiar nook of earth  
Dies with him, or is changed ; and very soon  
Even of the good is no memorial left.  
—The Poets, in their elegies and songs  
Lamenting the departed, call the groves,  
They call upon the hills and streams to mourn,  
And senseless rocks ; nor idly ; for they speak,  
In these their invocations, with a voice  
Obedient to the strong creative power  
Of human passion. Sympathies there are  
More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth,  
That steal upon the meditative mind,  
And grow with thought. Beside yon spring I stood,  
And eyed its waters till we seemed to feel  
One sadness, they and I. For them a bond  
Of brotherhood is broken : time has been  
When, every day, the touch of human hand  
Dislodged the natural sleep that binds them up  
In mortal stillness ; and they ministered  
To human comfort. Stooping down to drink,

Upon the slimy foot-stone I espied  
The useless fragment of a wooden bowl,  
Green with the moss of years, and subject only  
To the soft handling of the elements :  
There let it lie—how foolish are such thoughts !  
Forgive them ;—never—never did my steps  
Approach this door but she who dwelt within  
A daughter's welcome gave me, and I loved her  
As my own child. Oh, Sir ! the good die first,  
And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust  
Burn to the socket. Many a passenger  
Hath blessed poor Margaret for her gentle looks,  
When she upheld the cool refreshment drawn  
From that forsaken spring ; and no one came  
But he was welcome ; no one went away  
But that it seemed she loved him. She is dead,  
The light extinguished of her lonely hut,  
The hut itself abandoned to decay,  
And she forgotten in the quiet grave !

“ I speak,” continued he, “ of One whose stock  
Of virtues bloomed beneath this lowly roof.  
She was a Woman of a steady mind,  
Tender and deep in her excess of love ;  
Not speaking much, pleased rather with the joy  
Of her own thoughts : by some especial care  
Her temper had been framed, as if to make  
A Being, who by adding love to peace  
Might live on earth a life of happiness.

Her wedded Partner lacked not on his side  
The humble worth that satisfied her heart :  
Frugal, affectionate, sober, and withal  
Keenly industrious. She with pride would tell  
That he was often seated at his loom,  
In summer, ere the mower was abroad  
Among the dewy grass,—in early spring,  
Ere the last star had vanished.— They who passed  
At evening, from behind the garden fence  
Might hear his busy spade, which he would ply,  
After his daily work, until the light  
Had failed, and every leaf and flower were lost  
In the dark hedges. So their days were spent  
In peace and comfort ; and a pretty boy  
Was their best hope, next to the God in heaven.

Not twenty years ago, but you I think  
Can scarcely bear it now in mind, there came  
Two blighting seasons, when the fields were left  
With half a harvest. It pleased Heaven to add  
A worse affliction in the plague of war ;  
This happy Land was stricken to the heart !  
A Wanderer then among the cottages  
I, with my freight of winter raiment, saw  
The hardships of that season : many rich  
Sank down, as in a dream, among the poor ;  
And of the poor did many cease to be,  
And their place knew them not. Meanwhile, abridged  
Of daily comforts, gladly reconciled



To numerous self-denials, Margaret  
Went struggling on through those calamitous years  
With cheerful hope, until the second autumn,  
When her life's Helpmate on a sick-bed lay,  
Smitten with perilous fever. In disease  
He lingered long; and when his strength returned,  
He found the little he had stored, to meet  
The hour of accident or crippling age,  
Was all consumed. A second infant now  
Was added to the troubles of a time  
Laden, for them and all of their degree,  
With care and sorrow: shoals of artisans  
From ill-requited labour turned adrift  
Sought daily bread from public charity,  
They, and their wives and children—happier far  
Could they have lived as do the little birds  
That peck along the hedge-rows, or the kite  
That makes her dwelling on the mountain rocks!

A sad reverse it was for him who long  
Had filled with plenty, and possessed in peace,  
This lonely Cottage. At the door he stood,  
And whistled many a snatch of merry tunes  
That had no mirth in them; or with his knife  
Carved uncouth figures on the heads of sticks—  
Then, not less idly, sought, through every nook  
In house or garden, any casual work  
Of use or ornament; and with a strange,  
Amusing, yet uneasy, novelty,

He mingled, where he might, the various tasks  
Of summer, autumn, winter, and of spring.  
But this endured not ; his good humour soon  
Became a weight in which no pleasure was :  
And poverty brought on a petted mood  
And a sore temper : day by day he drooped,  
And he would leave his work—and to the town,  
Would turn, without an errand, his slack steps ;  
Or wander here and there among the fields.  
One while he would speak lightly of his babes,  
And with a cruel tongue : at other times  
He tossed them with a false unnatural joy :  
And 'twas a rueful thing to see the looks  
Of the poor innocent children. ‘Every smile,’  
Said Margaret to me, here beneath these trees,  
‘Made my heart bleed.’”

At this the Wanderer paused ;  
And, looking up to those enormous elms,  
He said, “’Tis now the hour of deepest noon.  
At this still season of repose and peace,  
This hour when all things which are not at rest  
Are cheerful ; while this multitude of flies  
Is filling all the air with melody ;  
Why should a tear be in an old Man’s eye ?  
Why should we thus, with an untoward mind,  
And in the weakness of humanity,  
From natural wisdom turn our hearts away ;  
To natural comfort shut our eyes and ears ;

And, feeding on disquiet, thus disturb  
The calm of nature with our restless thoughts?"

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He spake with somewhat of a solemn tone :  
But, when he ended, there was in his face  
Such easy cheerfulness, a look so mild,  
That for a little time it stole away  
All recollection, and that simple tale  
Passed from my mind like a forgotten sound.  
A while on trivial things we held discourse,  
To me soon tasteless. In my own despite,  
I thought of that poor Woman as of one  
Whom I had known and loved. He had rehearsed  
Her homely tale with such familiar power,  
With such an active countenance, an eye  
So busy, that the things of which he spake  
Seemed present ; and, attention now relaxed,  
A heart-felt chillness crept along my veins.  
I rose ; and, having left the breezy shade,  
Stood drinking comfort from the warmer sun,  
That had not cheered me long—ere, looking round  
Upon that tranquil Ruin, I returned,  
And begged of the old Man that, for my sake,  
He would resume his story. /

He replied,  
“ It were a wantonness, and would demand  
Severe reproof, if we were men whose hearts

Could hold vain dalliance with the misery  
Even of the dead ; contented thence to draw  
A momentary pleasure, never marked  
By reason, barren of all future good.  
But we have known that there is often found  
In mournful thoughts, and always might be found,  
A power to virtue friendly ; were't not so,  
I am a dreamer among men, indeed  
An idle dreamer ! 'Tis a common tale,  
An ordinary sorrow of man's life,  
A tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed  
In bodily form.—But without further bidding  
I will proceed.

While thus it fared with them,  
To whom this cottage, till those hapless years,  
Had been a blessed home, it was my chance  
To travel in a country far remote ;  
And when these lofty elms once more appeared,  
What pleasant expectations lured me on  
O'er the flat Common !—With quick step I reached  
The threshold, lifted with light hand the latch ;  
But, when I entered, Margaret looked at me  
A little while ; then turned her head away  
Speechless,—and, sitting down upon a chair,  
Wept bitterly. I wist not what to do,  
Nor how to speak to her. Poor Wretch ! at last  
She rose from off her seat, and then,—O Sir !  
I cannot *tell* how she pronounced my name :—

With fervent love, and with a face of grief  
Unutterably helpless, and a look  
That seemed to cling upon me, she enquired  
If I had seen her husband. As she spake  
A strange surprise and fear came to my heart,  
Nor had I power to answer ere she told  
That he had disappeared—not two months gone.  
He left his house: two wretched days had past,  
And on the third, as wistfully she raised  
Her head from off her pillow, to look forth,  
Like one in trouble, for returning light,  
Within her chamber-casement she espied  
A folded paper, lying as if placed  
To meet her waking eyes. This tremblingly  
She opened—found no writing, but beheld  
Pieces of money carefully enclosed,  
Silver and gold. ‘I shuddered at the sight,’  
Said Margaret, ‘for I knew it was his hand  
That must have placed it there; and ere that day  
Was ended, that long anxious day, I learned  
From one who by my husband had been sent  
With the sad news, that he had joined a troop  
Of soldiers, going to a distant land.  
—He left me thus—he could not gather heart  
To take a farewell of me; for he feared  
That I should follow with my babes, and sink  
Beneath the misery of that wandering life.’

This tale did Margaret tell with many tears:

And, when she ended, I had little power  
To give her comfort, and was glad to take  
Such words of hope from her own mouth as served  
To cheer us both. But long we had not talked  
Ere we built up a pile of better thoughts,  
And with a brighter eye she looked around  
As if she had been shedding tears of joy.  
We parted.—'Twas the time of early spring ;  
I left her busy with her garden tools ;  
And well remember, o'er that fence she looked,  
And, while I paced along the foot-way path,  
Called out, and sent a blessing after me,  
With tender cheerfulness, and with a voice  
That seemed the very sound of happy thoughts.

I roved o'er many a hill and many a dale,  
With my accustomed load ; in heat and cold,  
Through many a wood and many an open ground,  
In sunshine and in shade, in wet and fair,  
Drooping or blithe of heart, as might befall ;  
My best companions now the driving winds,  
And now the ' trotting brooks ' and whispering trees,  
And now the music of my own sad steps,  
With many a short-lived thought that passed between,  
And disappeared.

I journeyed back this way,  
When, in the warmth of midsummer, the wheat  
Was yellow ; and the soft and bladed grass,  
Springing afresh, had o'er the hay-field spread

Its tender verdure. At the door arrived,  
I found that she was absent. In the shade,  
Where now we sit, I waited her return.  
Her cottage, then a cheerful object, wore  
Its customary look,—only, it seemed,  
The honeysuckle, crowding round the porch,  
Hung down in heavier tufts ; and that bright weed,  
The yellow stone-crop, suffered to take root  
Along the window's edge, profusely grew,  
Blinding the lower panes. I turned aside,  
And strolled into her garden. It appeared  
To lag behind the season, and had lost  
Its pride of neatness. Daisy-flowers and thrift  
Had broken their trim lines, and straggled o'er :  
The paths they used to deck : carnations, once  
Prized for surpassing beauty, and no less  
For the peculiar pains they had required,  
Declined their languid heads, wanting support.  
The cumbrous bind-weed, with its wreaths and bells,  
Had twined about her two small rows of peas,  
And dragged them to the earth.

Ere this an hour  
Was wasted.—Back I turned my restless steps ;  
A stranger passed ; and, guessing whom I sought,  
He said that she was used to ramble far.—  
The sun was sinking in the west ; and now  
I sate with sad impatience. From within  
Her solitary infant cried aloud ;  
Then, like a blast that dies away self-stilled,

Her body was subdued. In every act  
Pertaining to her house-affairs, appeared  
The careless stillness of a thinking mind  
Self-occupied ; to which all outward things  
Are like an idle matter. Still she sighed,  
But yet no motion of the breast was seen,  
No heaving of the heart. While by the fire  
We sate together, sighs came on my ear,  
I knew not how, and hardly whence they came.

Ere my departure, to her care I gave,  
For her son's use, some tokens of regard,  
Which with a look of welcome she received ;  
And I exhorted her to place her trust  
In God's good love, and seek his help by prayer.  
I took my staff, and when I kissed her babe,  
The tears stood in her eyes. I left her then  
With the best hope and comfort I could give ;  
She thanked me for my wish ;—but for my hope  
It seemed she did not thank me.

I returned,  
And took my rounds along this road again  
Ere on its sunny bank the primrose flower  
Peeped forth, to give an earnest of the Spring.  
I found her sad and drooping : she had learned  
No tidings of her husband ; if he lived,  
She knew not that he lived ; if he were dead,  
She knew not he was dead. She seemed the same  
In person and appearance ; but her house



Bespake a sleepy hand of negligence ;  
The floor was neither dry nor neat, the hearth  
Was comfortless, and her small lot of books,  
Which, in the cottage-window, heretofore  
Had been piled up against the corner panes  
In seemly order, now, with straggling leaves  
Lay scattered here and there, open or shut,  
As they had chanced to fall. Her infant Babe  
Had from its Mother caught the trick of grief,  
And sighed among its playthings. Once again  
I turned towards the garden-gate, and saw  
More plainly still, that poverty and grief  
Were now come nearer to her : weeds defaced  
The hardened soil, and knots of withered grass :  
No ridges there appeared of clear black mold,  
No winter greenness ; of her herbs and flowers,  
It seemed the better part were gnawed away  
Or trampled into earth ; a chain of straw,  
Which had been twined about the slender stem  
Of a young apple-tree, lay at its root,  
The bark was nibbled round by truant sheep.  
—Margaret stood near, her infant in her arms,  
And, noting that my eye was on the tree,  
She said, ‘ I fear it will be dead and gone  
Ere Robert come again.’ Towards the house  
Together we returned ; and she enquired  
If I had any hope :—but for her babe  
And for her little orphan boy, she said,

She had no wish to live, that she must die  
Of sorrow. Yet I saw the idle loom  
Still in its place ; his sunday garments hung  
Upon the self-same nail ; his very staff  
Stood undisturbed behind the door.

And when,

In bleak December, I retraced this way,  
She told me that her little babe was dead,  
And she was left alone. She now, released  
From her maternal cares, had taken up  
The employment common through these wilds, and gained,  
By spinning hēmp, a pittance for herself ;  
And for this end had hired a neighbour's boy  
To give her needful help. That very time  
Most willingly she put her work aside,  
And walked with me along the miry road,  
Heedless how far ; and in such piteous sort  
That any heart had ached to hear her, begged  
That, wheresoc'er I went, I still would ask  
For him whom she had lost. We parted then—  
Our final parting ; for from that time forth  
Did many seasons pass ere I returned  
Into this tract again.

Nine tedious years ;

From their first separation, nine long years,  
She lingered in unquiet widowhood ;  
A Wife and Widow. Needs must it have been  
A sore heart-wasting ! I have heard, my Friend,  
That in yon arbour oftentimes she sate

Alone, through half the vacant sabbath day ;  
And, if a dog passed by, she still would quit  
The shade, and look abroad. On this old bench  
For hours she sate ; and evermore her eye  
Was busy in the distance, shaping things  
That made her heart beat quick. You see that path,  
Now faint,—the grass has crept o'er its grey line ;  
There, to and fro, she paced through many a day  
Of the warm summer, from a belt of hemp  
That girt her waist, spinning the long drawn thread  
With backward steps. Yet ever as there passed  
A man whose garments showed the soldier's red,  
Or crippled mendicant in sailor's garb,  
The little child who sate to turn the wheel  
Ceased from his task ; and she with faltering voice  
Made many a fond enquiry ; and when they,  
Whose presence gave no comfort, were gone by,  
Her heart was still more sad. And by yon gate,  
That bars the traveller's road, she often stood,  
And when a stranger horseman came, the latch  
Would lift, and in his face look wistfully :  
Most happy, if, from aught discovered there  
Of tender feeling, she might dare repeat  
The same sad question. Meanwhile her poor Hut  
Sank to decay ; for he was gone, whose hand,  
At the first nipping of October frost,  
Closed up each chink, and with fresh bands of straw  
Chequered the green-grown thatch. And so she lived

## ARGUMENT.

Page 42, The Author describes his travels with the Wanderer, whose character is further illustrated—44, Morning scene, and view of a Village Wake—47, Wanderer's account of a Friend whom he purposes to visit—53, View, from an eminence, of the Valley which his Friend had chosen for his retreat—54, Sound of singing from below—a funeral procession—55, Descent into the Valley—57, Observations drawn from the Wanderer at sight of a book accidentally discovered in a recess in the Valley—59, Meeting with the Wanderer's friend, the Solitary—61, Wanderer's description of the mode of burial in this mountainous district—62, Solitary contrasts with this, that of the individual carried a few minutes before from the cottage ; 64, The cottage entered—65, Description of the Solitary's apartment—65, Repast there—66, View from the window of two mountain summits ; and the Solitary's description of the companionship they afford him—67, Account of the departed inmate of the cottage—71, Description of a grand spectacle upon the mountains, with its effect upon the Solitary's mind—73, Leave the house.

## BOOK SECOND.

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### THE SOLITARY.

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IN days of yore how fortunately fared  
The Minstrel ! wandering on from hall to hall,  
Baronial court or royal ; cheered with gifts  
Munificent, and love, and ladies' praise ;  
Now meeting on his road an armed knight,  
Now resting with a pilgrim by the side  
Of a clear brook ;—beneath an abbey's roof  
One evening sumptuously lodged ; the next,  
Humbly in a religious hospital ;  
Or with some merry outlaws of the wood ;  
Or haply shrouded in a hermit's cell.  
Him, sleeping or awake, the robber spared ;  
He walked—protected from the sword of war  
By virtue of that sacred instrument  
His harp, suspended at the traveller's side ;  
His dear companion wheresoe'er he went  
Opening from land to land an easy way

By melody, and by the charm of verse.  
Yet not the noblest of that honoured Race  
Drew happier, loftier, more empasioned thoughts  
From his long journeyings and eventful life,  
Than this obscure Itinerant had skill  
To gather, ranging through the tamer ground  
Of these our unimagivative days ;  
Both while he trod the earth in humblest guise  
Accoutred with his burthen and his staff ;  
And now, when free to move with lighter pace.

What wonder, then, if I, whose favourite school  
Hath been the fields, the roads, and rural lanes,  
Looked on this guide with reverential love ?  
Each with the other pleased, we now pursued  
Our journey, under favourable skies.  
Turn wheresoe'er we would, he was a light  
Unfailing : not a hamlet could we pass,  
Rarely a house, that did not yield to him  
Remembrances ; or from his tongue call forth  
Some way-beguiling tale. Nor less regard  
Accompanied those strains of apt discourse,  
Which nature's various objects might inspire ;  
And in the silence of his face I read  
His overflowing spirit. Birds and beasts,  
And the mute fish that glances in the stream,  
And harmless reptile coiling in the sun,  
And gorgeous insect hovering in the air,  
The fowl domestic, and the household dog—

In his capacious mind, he loved them all :  
Their rights acknowledging he felt for all.  
Oft was occasion given me to perceive  
How the calm pleasures of the pasturing herd  
To happy contemplation soothed his walk ;  
How the poor brute's condition, forced to run  
Its course of suffering in the public road,  
Sad contrast ! all too often smote his heart  
With unavailing pity. Rich in love  
And sweet humanity, he was, himself,  
To the degree that he desired, beloved.  
—Greetings and smiles we met with all day long  
From faces that he knew ; we took our seats  
By many a cottage hearth, where he received  
The welcome of an Inmate come from far.  
—Nor was he loth to enter ragged huts,  
Huts where his charity was blest ; his voice  
Heard as the voice of an experienced friend.  
And, sometimes, where the poor man held dispute  
With his own mind, unable to subdue  
Impatience through inaptness to perceive  
General distress in his particular lot ;  
Or cherishing resentment, or in vain  
Struggling against it ; with a soul perplexed,  
And finding in herself no steady power  
To draw the line of comfort that divides  
Calamity, the chastisement of Heaven,  
From the injustice of our brother men ;  
To him appeal was made as to a judge ;

Who, with an understanding heart, allayed  
The perturbation ; listened to the plea ;  
Resolved the dubious point ; and sentence gave  
So grounded, so applied, that it was heard  
With softened spirit, even when it condemned.

Such intercourse I witnessed, while we roved,  
Now as his choice directed, now as mine ;  
Or both, with equal readiness of will,  
Our course submitting to the changeful breeze  
Of accident. But when the rising sun  
Had three times called us to renew our walk,  
My Fellow-traveller, with earnest voice,  
As if the thought were but a moment old,  
Claimed absolute dominion for the day.  
We started—and he led me toward the hills,  
Up through an ample vale, with higher hills  
Before us, mountains stern and desolate ;  
But, in the majesty of distance, now  
Set off, and to our ken appearing fair  
Of aspect, with aërial softness clad,  
And beautified with morning's purple beams.

The wealthy, the luxurious, by the stress  
Of business roused, or pleasure, ere their time,  
May roll in chariots, or provoke the hoofs  
Of the fleet coursers they bestride, to raise  
From earth the dust of morning, slow to rise ;  
And they, if blest with health and hearts at ease,



Shall lack not their enjoyment :—but how faint  
Compared with ours ! who, pacing side by side,  
Could, with an eye of leisure, look on all  
That we beheld ; and lend the listening sense  
To every grateful sound of earth and air ;  
Pausing at will—our spirits braced, our thoughts  
Pleasant as roses in the thickets blown,  
And pure as dew bathing their crimson leaves.

Mount slowly, sun ! that we may journey long,  
By this dark hill protected from thy beams !  
Such is the summer pilgrim's frequent wish ;  
But quickly from among our morning thoughts  
'Twas chased away : for, toward the western side  
Of the broad vale, casting a casual glance,  
We saw a throng of people ;—wherefore met ?  
Blithe notes of music, suddenly let loose  
On the thrilled ear, and flags uprising, yield  
Prompt answer ; they proclaim the annual Wake,  
Which the bright season favours.—Tabor and pipe  
In purpose join to hasten or reprove  
The laggard Rustic ; and repay with boons  
Of merriment a party-coloured knot,  
Already formed upon the village green.  
—Beyond the limits of the shadow cast  
By the broad hill, glistened upon our sight  
That gay assemblage. Round them and above,  
Glitter, with dark recesses interposed,  
Casement, and cottage-roof, and stems of trees

Half-veiled in vapoury cloud, the silver steam  
Of dews fast melting on their leafy boughs  
By the strong sunbeams smitten. Like a mast  
Of gold, the Maypole shines ; as if the rays  
Of morning, aided by exhaling dew,  
With gladsome influence could re-animate  
The faded garlands dangling from its sides.

Said I, "The music and the sprightly scene  
Invite us ; shall we quit our road, and join  
These festive matins ?"—He replied, "Not loth  
Here would I linger, and with you partake,  
Not one hour merely, but till evening's close,  
The simple pastimes of the day and place.  
By the fleet Racers, ere the sun be set,  
The turf of yon large pasture will be skimmed ;  
There, too, the lusty Wrestlers shall contend :  
But know we not that he, who intermits  
The appointed task and duties of the day,  
Untunes full oft the pleasures of the day ;  
Checking the finer spirits that refuse  
To flow, when purposes are lightly changed ?  
We must proceed—a length of journey yet  
Remains untraced." Then, pointing with his staff  
Raised toward those craggy summits, his intent  
He thus imparted:—

" In a spot that lies  
Among yon mountain fastnesses concealed,  
You will receive, before the hour of noon,

Good recompense, I hope, for this day's toil—  
From sight of One who lives secluded there,  
Lonesome and lost : of whom, and whose past life,  
(Not to forestall such knowledge as may be  
More faithfully collected from himself)  
This brief communication shall suffice.

Though now sojourning there, he, like myself,  
Sprang from a stock of lowly parentage  
Among the wilds of Scotland, in a tract  
Where many a sheltered and well-tended plant,  
Bears, on the humblest ground of social life,  
Blossoms of piety and innocence.  
Such grateful promises his youth displayed :  
And, having shown in study forward zeal,  
He to the Ministry was duly called ;  
And straight, incited by a curious mind  
Filled with vague hopes, he undertook the charge  
Of Chaplain to a military troop  
Cheered by the Highland bagpipe, as they marched  
In plaided vest,—his fellow-countrymen.  
This office filling, yet by native power  
And force of native inclination, made  
An intellectual ruler in the haunts  
Of social vanity, he walked the world,  
Gay, and affecting graceful gaiety ;  
Lax, buoyant—less a pastor with his flock  
Than a soldier among soldiers—lived and roamed  
Where Fortune led :—and Fortune, who oft proves

The careless wanderer's friend, to him made known  
A blooming Lady—a conspicuous flower,  
Admired for beauty, for her sweetness praised ;  
Whom he had sensibility to love,  
Ambition to attempt, and skill to win.

For this fair Bride, most rich in gifts of mind,  
Nor sparingly endowed with worldly wealth,  
His office he relinquished ; and retired  
From the world's notice to a rural home.  
Youth's season yet with him was scarcely past,  
And she was in youth's prime. How full their joy,  
How free their love ! nor did that love decay,  
Nor joy abate ; 'till, pitiable doom !  
In the short course of one undreaded year,  
Death blasted all. Death suddenly o'erthrew  
Two lovely Children—all that they possessed !  
The Mother followed :—miserably bare  
The one Survivor stood ; he wept, he prayed  
For his dismissal ; day and night, compelled  
By pain to turn his thoughts towards the grave,  
And face the regions of eternity.  
An uncomplaining apathy displaced  
This anguish ; and, indifferent to delight,  
To aim and purpose, he consumed his days,  
To private interest dead, and public care.  
So lived he ; so he might have died.

But now,  
To the wide world's astonishment, appeared

A glorious opening, the unlooked-for dawn,  
That promised everlasting joy to France !  
Her voice of social transport reached even him !  
He broke from his contracted bounds, repaired  
To the great City, an emporium then  
Of golden expectations, and receiving  
Freights every day from a new world of hope.  
Thither his popular talents he transferred ;  
And, from the pulpit, zealously maintained  
The cause of Christ and civil liberty,  
As one, and moving to one glorious end.  
Intoxicating service ! I might say  
A happy service ; for he was sincere  
As vanity and fondness for applause,  
And new and shapeless wishes, would allow.

That righteous cause (such power hath freedom) bound,  
For one hostility, in friendly league  
Ethereal natures and the worst of slaves ;  
Was served from rival advocates that came  
From regions opposite as heaven and hell.  
One courage seemed to animate them all :  
And, from the dazzling conquests daily gained  
By their united efforts, there arose  
A proud and most presumptuous confidence  
In the transcendent wisdom of the age,  
And her discernment ; not alone in rights,  
And in the origin and bounds of power  
Social and temporal ; but in laws divine,

Deduced by reason, or to faith revealed.  
An overweening trust was raised ; and fear  
Cast out, alike of person and of thing.  
Plague from this union spread, whose subtle bane  
The strongest did not easily escape ;  
And He, what wonder ! took a mortal taint.  
How shall I trace the change, how bear to tell  
That he broke faith with them whom he had laid  
In earth's dark chambers, with a Christian's hope !  
An infidel contempt of holy writ  
Stole by degrees upon his mind ; and hence  
Life, like that Roman Janus, double-faced ;  
Vilest hypocrisy—the laughing, gay  
Hypocrisy, not leagued with fear, but pride.  
Smooth words he had to wheedle simple souls ;  
But, for disciples of the inner school,  
Old freedom was old servitude, and they  
The wisest whose opinions stooped the least  
To known restraints : and who most boldly drew  
Hopeful prognostications from a creed,  
That, in the light of false philosophy,  
Spread like a halo round a misty moon,  
Widening its circle as the storms advance.

His sacred function was at length renounced ;  
And every day and every place enjoyed  
The unshackled layman's natural liberty ;  
Speech, manners, morals, all without disguise.  
I do not wish to wrong him ; though the course

Of private life licentiously displayed  
Unhallowed actions—planted like a crown  
Upon the insolent aspiring brow  
Of spurious notions—worn as open signs  
Of prejudice subdued—still he retained,  
'Mid much abasement, what he had received  
From nature, an intense and glowing mind.  
Wherefore, when humbled Liberty grew weak,  
And mortal sickness on her face appeared,  
He coloured objects to his own desire  
As with a lover's passion. Yet his moods  
Of pain were keen as those of better men,  
Nay keener, as his fortitude was less :  
And he continued, when worse days were come,  
To deal about his sparkling eloquence,  
Struggling against the strange reverse with zeal  
That shewed like happiness. But, in despite  
Of all this outside bravery, within,  
He neither felt encouragement nor hope :  
For moral dignity, and strength of mind,  
Were wanting ; and simplicity of life ;  
And reverence for himself ; and, last and best,  
Confiding thoughts, through love and fear of Him  
Before whose sight the troubles of this world  
Are vain as billows in a tossing sea.

The glory of the times fading away—  
The splendor, which had given a festal air  
To self-importance, hallowed it, and veiled

From his own sight—this gone, he forfeited  
All joy in human nature ; was consumed,  
And vexed, and chafed, by levity and scorn,  
And fruitless indignation ; galled by pride ;  
Made desperate by contempt of men who throve  
Before his sight in power or fame, and won,  
Without desert, what he desired ; weak men,  
Too weak even for his envy or his hate !  
Tormented thus, after a wandering course  
Of discontent, and inwardly opprest  
With malady—in part, I fear, provoked  
By weariness of life, he fixed his home,  
Or, rather say, sate down by very chance,  
Among these rugged hills ; where now he dwells,  
And wastes the sad remainder of his hours  
In self-indulging spleen, that doth not want  
Its own voluptuousness ;—on this resolved,  
With this content, that he will live and die  
Forgotten,—at safe distance from ‘a world  
Not moving to his mind.’”

These serious words

Closed the preparatory notices  
That served my Fellow-traveller to beguile  
The way, while we advanced up that wide vale.  
Diverging now (as if his quest had been  
Some secret of the mountains, cavern, fall  
Of water, or some boastful eminence,  
Renowned for splendid prospect far and wide)  
We scaled, without a track to ease our steps,



A steep ascent ; and reached a dreary plain,  
With a tumultuous waste of huge hill tops  
Before us ; savage region ! which I paced  
Dispirited : when, all at once, behold !  
Beneath our feet, a little lowly vale,  
A lowly vale, and yet uplifted high  
Among the mountains ; even as if the spot  
Had been, from eldest time by wish of theirs  
So placed, to be shut out from all the world !  
Urn-like it was in shape, deep as an urn ;  
With rocks encompassed, save that to the south  
Was one small opening, where a heath-clad ridge  
Supplied a boundary less abrupt and close ;  
A quiet treeless nook, with two green fields,  
A liquid pool that glittered in the sun,  
And one bare dwelling ; one abode, no more !  
It seemed the home of poverty and toil,  
Though not of want : the little fields, made green  
By husbandry of many thrifty years,  
Paid cheerful tribute to the moorland house.  
—There crows the cock, single in his domain :  
The small birds find in spring no thicket there  
To shroud them ; only from the neighbouring vales  
The cuckoo, straggling up to the hill tops,  
Shouteth faint tidings of some gladder place.

Ah ! what a sweet Recess, thought I, is here !  
Instantly throwing down my limbs at ease  
Upon a bed of heath ;—full many a spot

Of hidden beauty have I chanced to espy  
Among the mountains ; never one like this ;  
So lonesome, and so perfectly secure ;  
Not melancholy—no, for it is green,  
And bright, and fertile, furnished in itself  
With the few needful things that life requires.  
—In rugged arms how softly does it lie,  
How tenderly protected ! Far and near  
We have an image of the pristine earth,  
The planet in its nakedness : were this  
Man's only dwelling, sole appointed seat,  
First, last, and single in the breathing world,  
It could not be more quiet : peace is here  
Or nowhere ; days unruffled by the gale  
Of public news or private ; years that pass  
Forgetfully ; uncalled upon to pay  
The common penalties of mortal life,  
Sickness, or accident, or grief, or pain.

On these and kindred thoughts intent I lay  
In silence musing by my Comrade's side,  
He also silent ; when from out the heart  
Of that profound abyss a solemn voice,  
Or several voices in one solemn sound,  
Was heard ascending ; mournful, deep, and slow  
The cadence, as of psalms—a funeral dirge !  
We listened, looking down upon the hut,  
But seeing no one : meanwhile from below  
The strain continued, spiritual as before ;

And now distinctly could I recognise  
These words :—‘ *Shall in the grave thy love be known,  
In death thy faithfulness ?* ’—“ God rest his soul ! ”  
The Wanderer cried, abruptly breaking silence,—  
“ He is departed, and finds peace at last ! ”

This scarcely spoken, and those holy strains  
Not ceasing, forth appeared in view a band  
Of rustic persons, from behind the hut  
Bearing a coffin in the midst, with which  
They shaped their course along the sloping side  
Of that small valley, singing as they moved ;  
A sober company and few, the men  
Bare-headed, and all decently attired !  
Some steps when they had thus advanced, the dirge  
Ended ; and, from the stillness that ensued  
Recovering, to my Friend I said, “ You spake,  
Methought, with apprehension that these rites  
Are paid to Him upon whose shy retreat  
This day we purposed to intrude.”—“ I did so,  
But let us hence, that we may learn the truth :  
Perhaps it is not he but some one else  
For whom this pious service is performed ;  
Some other tenant of the solitude.”

So, to a steep and difficult descent  
Trusting ourselves, we wound from crag to crag,  
Where passage could be won ; and, as the last  
Of the mute train, behind the heathy top

Of that off-sloping outlet, disappeared,  
I, more impatient in my downward course,  
Had landed upon easy ground ; and there  
Stood waiting for my Comrade. When behold  
An object that enticed my steps aside !  
A narrow, winding entry opened out  
Into a platform—that lay, sheepfold-wise,  
Enclosed between an upright mass of rock  
And one old moss-grown wall ;—a cool recess,  
And fanciful ! For where the rock and wall  
Met in an angle, hung a penthouse, framed  
By thrusting two rude staves into the wall  
And overlaying them with mountain sods ;  
To weather-fend a little turf-built seat  
Whereon a full-grown man might rest, nor dread  
The burning sunshine, or a transient shower ;  
But the whole plainly wrought by children's hands !  
Whose skill had thronged the floor with a proud show  
Of baby-houses, curiously arranged ;  
Nor wanting ornament of walks between,  
With mimic trees inserted in the turf,  
And gardens interposed. Pleased with the sight,  
I could not choose but beckon to my Guide,  
Who, entering, round him threw a careless glance,  
Impatient to pass on, when I exclaimed,  
“ Lo ! what is here ? ” and stooping down, drew forth  
A book, that, in the midst of stones and moss  
And wreck of party-coloured earthen-ware,  
Aptly disposed, had lent its help to raise

One of those petty structures. "Gracious Heaven!"  
The Wanderer cried, "it cannot but be his,  
And he is gone!" The book, which in my hand  
Had opened of itself (for it was swoln  
With searching damp, and seemingly had lain  
To the injurious elements exposed  
From week to week,) I found to be a work  
In the French tongue, a Novel of Voltaire,  
His famous Optimist. "Unhappy Man!"  
Exclaimed my Friend: "here then has been to him  
Retreat within retreat, a sheltering-place  
Within how deep a shelter! He had fits,  
Even to the last, of genuine tenderness,  
And loved the haunts of children: here, no doubt,  
Pleasing and pleased, he shared their simple sports,  
Or sate companionless; and here the book,  
Left and forgotten in his careless way,  
Must by the cottage children have been found:  
Heaven bless them, and their inconsiderate work!  
To what odd purpose have the darlings turned  
This sad memorial of their hapless friend!"

"Me," said I, "most doth it surprise, to find  
Such book in such a place!"—"A book it is,"  
He answered, "to the Person suited well,  
Though little suited to surrounding things:  
'Tis strange, I grant; and stranger still had been  
To see the Man who owned it, dwelling here,  
With one poor shepherd, far from all the world!"

Now, if our errand hath been thrown away,  
As from these intimations I forebode,  
Grieved shall I be—less for my sake than yours,  
And least of all for him who is no more.”

By this, the book was in the old Man's hand ;  
And he continued, glancing on the leaves  
An eye of scorn :—“The lover,” said he, “doomed  
To love when hope hath failed him—whom no depth  
Of privacy is deep enough to hide,  
Hath yet his bracelet or his lock of hair,  
And that is joy to him. When change of times  
Hath summoned kings to scaffolds, do but give  
The faithful servant, who must hide his head  
Henceforth in whatsoever nook he may,  
A kerchief sprinkled with his master's blood,  
And he too hath his comforter. How poor,  
Beyond all poverty how destitute,  
Must that Man have been left, who, hither driven,  
Flying or seeking, could yet bring with him  
No dearer relique, and no better stay,  
Than this dull product of a scoffer's pen,  
Impure conceits discharging from a heart  
Hardened by impious pride !—I did not fear  
To tax you with this journey ;”—mildly said  
My venerable Friend, as forth we stepped  
Into the presence of the cheerful light—  
“For I have knowledge that you do not shrink  
From moving spectacles ;—but let us on.”

So speaking, on he went, and at the word  
I followed, till he made a sudden stand :  
For full in view, approaching through a gate  
That opened from the enclosure of green fields  
Into the rough uncultivated ground,  
Behold the Man whom he had fancied dead !  
I knew from his deportment, mien, and dress,  
That it could be no other ; a pale face,  
A tall and meagre person, in a garb  
Not rustic, dull and faded like himself !  
He saw us not, though distant but few steps ;  
For he was busy, dealing, from a store  
Upon a broad leaf carried, choicest strings  
Of red ripe currants ; gift by which he strove,  
With intermixture of endearing words,  
To soothe a Child, who walked beside him, weeping  
As if disconsolate.—“ They to the grave  
Are bearing him, my little one,” he said,  
“ To the dark pit ; but he will feel no pain ;  
His body is at rest, his soul in heaven.”

More might have followed—but my honoured Friend  
Broke in upon the Speaker with a frank  
And cordial greeting.—Vivid was the light  
That flashed and sparkled from the other's eyes ;  
He was all fire : the sickness from his face  
Passed like a fancy that is swept away ;  
Hands joined he with his Visitant,—a grasp,  
An eager grasp ; and many moments' space,

When the first glow of pleasure was no more,  
And much of what had vanished was returned,  
An amicable smile retained the life  
Which it had unexpectedly received,  
Upon his hollow cheek. "How kind," he said,  
"Nor could your coming have been better timed ;  
For this, you see, is in our narrow world  
A day of sorrow. I have here a charge"—  
And, speaking thus, he patted tenderly  
The sun-burnt forehead of the weeping child—  
"A little mourner, whom it is my task  
To comfort ;—but how came ye ?—if yon track  
(Which doth at once befriend us and betray)  
Conducted hither your most welcome feet,  
Ye could not miss the funeral train—they yet  
Have scarcely disappeared." "This blooming child,"  
Said the old Man, "is of an age to weep  
At any grave or solemn spectacle,  
Inly distressed or overpowered with awe,  
He knows not why ;—but he, perchance, this day,  
Is shedding orphan's tears ; and you yourself  
Must have sustained a loss."—"The hand of Death,"  
He answered, "has been here ; but could not well  
Have fallen more lightly, if it had not fallen  
Upon myself."—The other left these words  
Unnoticed, thus continuing.—

"From yon crag,  
Down whose steep sides we dropped into the vale,  
We heard the hymn they sang—a solemn sound



Heard any where ; but in a place like this  
'Tis more than human ! Many precious rites  
And customs of our rural ancestry  
Are gone, or stealing from us ; this, I hope,  
Will last for ever. Oft on my way have I  
Stood still, though but a casual passenger,  
So much I felt the awfulness of life,  
In that one moment when the corse is lifted  
In silence, with a hush of decency ;  
Then from the threshold moves with song of peace,  
And confidential yearnings, to its home,  
Its final home on earth. What traveller—who—  
(How far soe'er a stranger) does not own  
The bond of brotherhood, when he sees them go,  
A mute procession on the houseless road ;  
Or passing by some single tenement  
Or clustered dwellings, where again they raise  
The monitory voice ? But most of all  
It touches, it confirms, and elevates,  
Then, when the body, soon to be consigned  
Ashes to ashes, dust bequeathed to dust,  
Is raised from the church-aisle, and forward borne  
Upon the shoulders of the next in love,  
The nearest in affection or in blood ;  
Yea, by the very mourners who had knelt  
Beside the coffin, resting on its lid  
In silent grief their unuplifted heads,  
And heard meanwhile the Psalmist's mournful plaint,  
And that most awful scripture which declares

We shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed !  
—Have I not seen—ye likewise may have seen—  
Son, husband, brothers—brothers side by side,  
And son and father also side by side,  
Rise from that posture :—and in concert move,  
On the green turf following the vested Priest,  
Four dear supporters of one senseless weight,  
From which they do not shrink, and under which  
They faint not, but advance tow'ards the open grave  
Step after step—together, with their firm  
Unhidden faces : he that suffers most  
He outwardly, and inwardly perhaps,  
The most serene, with most undaunted eye !—  
Oh ! blest are they who live and die like these,  
Loved with such love, and with such sorrow mourned !”

“That poor Man taken hence to-day,” replied  
The Solitary, with a faint sarcastic smile  
Which did not please me, “must be deemed, I fear,  
Of the unblest ; for he will surely sink  
Into his mother earth without such pomp  
Of grief, depart without occasion given  
By him for such array of fortitude.  
Full seventy winters hath he lived, and mark !  
This simple Child will mourn his one short hour,  
And I shall miss him ; scanty tribute ! yet,  
This wanting, he would leave the sight of men,  
If love were his sole claim upon their care,  
Like a ripe date which in the desert falls  
Without a hand to gather it.”

At this

I interposed, though loth to speak, and said,  
“Can it be thus among so small a band  
As ye must needs be here? in such a place  
I would not willingly, methinks, lose sight  
Of a departing cloud.”—“’Twas not for love”  
Answered the sick Man with a careless voice—  
“That I came hither; neither have I found  
Among associates who have power of speech,  
Nor in such other converse as is here,  
Temptation so prevailing as to change  
That mood, or undermine my first resolve.”  
Then, speaking in like careless sort, he said  
To my benign Companion,—“Pity ’tis  
That fortune did not guide you to this house  
A few days earlier; then would you have seen  
What stuff the Dwellers in a solitude,  
That seems by Nature hollowed out to be  
The seat and bosom of pure innocence,  
Are made of; an ungracious matter this!  
Which, for truth’s sake, yet in remembrance too  
Of past discussions with this zealous friend  
And advocate of humble life, I now  
Will force upon his notice; undeterred  
By the example of his own pure course,  
And that respect and deference which a soul  
May fairly claim, by niggard age enriched  
In what she values most—the love of God  
And his frail creature Man;—but ye shall hear.

I talk—and ye are standing in the sun  
Without refreshment !” Quickly had he spoken,  
And with light steps still quicker than his words,  
Led tow’rds the Cottage ;—homely was the spot ;  
And, to my feeling, ere we reached the door,  
Had almost a forbidding nakedness ;  
Less fair, I grant, even painfully less fair,  
Than it appeared when from the beetling rock  
We had looked down upon it. All within,  
As left by the departed company,  
Was silent ; and the solitary clock  
Ticked, as I thought, with melancholy sound.—  
Following our Guide, we clomb the cottage-stairs  
And reached a small apartment dark and low,  
Which was no sooner entered than our Host  
Said gaily, “ This is my domain, my cell,  
My hermitage, my cabin, what you will—  
I love it better than a snail his house.  
But now ye shall be feasted with our best.”

So, with more ardour than an unripe girl  
Left one day mistress of her mother’s stores,  
He went about his hospitable task.  
My eyes were busy, and my thoughts no less,  
And pleased I looked upon my grey-haired Friend,  
As if to thank him ; he returned that look,  
Cheered, plainly, and yet serious. What a wreck  
Had we around us ! scattered was the floor,  
And, in like sort, chair, window-seat, and shelf,

With books, maps, fossils, withered plants and flowers,  
And tufts of mountain moss. Mechanic tools  
Lay intermixed with scraps of paper, some  
Scribbled with verse : a broken angling-rod  
And shattered telescope, together linked  
By cobwebs, stood within a dusty nook ;  
And instruments of music, some half-made,  
Some in disgrace, hung dangling from the walls.  
But speedily the promise was fulfilled ;  
A feast before us, and a courteous Host  
Inviting us in glee to sit and eat.  
A napkin, white as foam of that rough brook  
By which it had been bleached, o'erspread the board ;  
And was itself half-covered with a load  
Of dainties,—oaten bread, curd, cheese, and cream ;  
And cakes of butter curiously embossed,  
Butter that had imbibed from meadow-flowers  
A golden hue, delicate as their own  
Faintly reflected in a lingering stream.  
Nor lacked, for more delight on that warm day,  
Our table, small parade of garden fruits,  
And whortle-berries from the mountain side.  
The Child, who long ere this had stilled his sobs,  
Was now a help to his late comforter,  
And moved, a willing Page, as he was bid,  
Ministering to our need.

In genial mood,

While at our pastoral banquet thus we sate  
Fronting the window of that little cell,

I could not, ever and anon, forbear  
To glance an upward look on two huge peaks,  
That from some other vale peered into this.  
“Those lusty twins,” exclaimed our host, “if here  
It were your lot to dwell, would soon become  
Your prized companions.—Many are the notes  
Which, in his tuneful course, the wind draws forth  
From rocks, woods, caverns, heaths, and dashing shores ;  
And well those lofty brethren bear their part  
In the wild concert—chiefly when the storm  
Rides high ; then all the upper air they fill  
With roaring sound, that ceases not to flow,  
Like smoke, along the level of the blast,  
In mighty current ; theirs, too, is the song  
Of stream and headlong flood that seldom fails ;  
And, in the grim and breathless hour of noon,  
Methinks that I have heard them echo back  
The thunder’s greeting. Nor have nature’s laws  
Left them ungifted with a power to yield  
Music of finer tone ; a harmony,  
So do I call it, though it be the hand  
Of silence, though there be no voice ;—the clouds,  
The mist, the shadows, light of golden suns,  
Motions of moonlight, all come thither—touch,  
And have an answer—thither come, and shape  
A language not unwelcome to sick hearts  
And idle spirits :—there the sun himself,  
At the calm close of summer’s longest day,  
Rests his substantial orb ;—between those heights

And on the top of either pinnacle,  
 More keenly than elsewhere in night's blue vault,  
 Sparkle the stars, as of their station proud.  
 Thoughts are not busier in the mind of man  
 Than the mute agents stirring there :—alone  
 Here do I sit and watch.—”

A fall of voice,

Regretted like the nightingale's last note,  
 Had scarcely closed this high-wrought rhapsody,  
 Ere with inviting smile the Wanderer said :  
 “ Now for the tale with which you threatened us !”  
 “ In truth the threat escaped me unawares :  
 Should the tale tire you, let this challenge stand  
 For my excuse. Dissevered from mankind,  
 As to your eyes and thoughts we must have seemed  
 When ye looked down upon us from the crag,  
 Islanders of a stormy mountain sea,  
 We are not so ;—perpetually we touch  
 Upon the vulgar ordinances of the world,  
 And he, whom this our cottage hath to-day  
 Relinquished, lived dependent for his bread  
 Upon the laws of public charity.  
 The Housewife, tempted by such slender gains  
 As might from that occasion be distilled,  
 Opened, as she before had done for me,  
 Her doors to admit this homeless Pensioner ;  
 The portion gave of coarse but wholesome fare  
 Which appetite required—a blind dull nook,  
 Such as she had, the *kennel* of his rest !

This, in itself not ill, would yet have been  
Ill borne in earlier life ; but his was now  
The still contentedness of seventy years.  
Calm did he sit under the wide-spread tree  
Of his old age ; and yet less calm and meek,  
Winningly meek or venerably calm,  
Than slow and torpid ; paying in this wise  
A penalty, if penalty it were,  
For spendthrift feats, excesses of his prime.  
I loved the old Man, for I pitied him !  
A task it was, I own, to hold discourse  
With one so slow in gathering up his thoughts,  
But he was a cheap pleasure to my eyes ;  
Mild, inoffensive, ready in *his* way,  
And helpful to his utmost power : and there  
Our housewife knew full well what she possessed !  
He was her vassal of all labour, tilled  
Her garden, from the pasture fetched her kine ;  
And, one among the orderly array  
Of hay-makers, beneath the burning sun  
Maintained his place ; or heedfully pursued  
His course, on errands bound, to other vales,  
Leading sometimes an inexperienced child  
Too young for any profitable task.  
So moved he like a shadow that performed  
Substantial service. Mark me now, and learn  
For what reward ! The moon her monthly round  
Hath not completed since our dame, the queen  
Of this one cottage and this lonely dale,



Into my little sanctuary rushed—  
Voice to a rueful treble humanized,  
And features in deplorable dismay.  
I treat the matter lightly, but, alas !  
It is most serious : persevering rain  
Had fallen in torrents ; all the mountain tops  
Were hidden, and black vapours coursed their sides ;  
This had I seen, and saw ; but, till she spake,  
Was wholly ignorant that my ancient Friend,  
Who at her bidding, early and alone,  
Had clomb aloft to delve the moorland turf  
For winter fuel, to his noontide meal  
Returned not, and now, haply, on the heights  
Lay at the mercy of this raging storm.  
‘ Inhuman ! ’—said I, ‘ was an old Man’s life  
Not worth the trouble of a thought ?—alas !  
This notice comes too late.’ With joy I saw  
Her husband enter—from a distant vale.  
We sallied forth together ; found the tools  
Which the neglected veteran had dropped,  
But through all quarters looked for him in vain.  
We shouted—but no answer ! Darkness fell  
Without remission of the blast or shower,  
And fears for our own safety drove us home.

I, who weep little, did, I will confess,  
The moment I was seated here alone,  
Honour my little cell with some few tears  
Which anger and resentment could not dry.

All night the storm endured ; and, soon as help  
Had been collected from the neighbouring vale,  
With morning we renewed our quest : the wind  
Was fallen, the rain abated, but the hills  
Lay shrouded in impenetrable mist ;  
And long and hopelessly we sought in vain :  
'Till, chancing on that lofty ridge to pass  
A heap of ruin, almost without walls  
And wholly without roof (the bleached remains  
Of a small chapel, where, in ancient time,  
The peasants of these lonely valleys used  
To meet for worship on that central height)—  
We there espied the object of our search,  
Lying full three parts buried among tufts  
Of heath-plant, under and above him strewn,  
To baffle, as he might, the watery storm :  
And there we found him breathing peaceably,  
Snug as a child that hides itself in sport  
'Mid a green hay-cock in a sunny field.  
We spake—he made reply, but would not stir  
At our entreaty ; less from want of power  
Than apprehension and bewildering thoughts.

So was he lifted gently from the ground,  
And with their freight homeward the shepherds moved  
Through the dull mist, I following—when a step,  
A single step, that freed me from the skirts  
Of the blind vapour, opened to my view  
Glory beyond all glory ever seen

By waking sense or by the dreaming soul !  
The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,  
Was of a mighty city—boldly say  
A wilderness of building, sinking far  
And self-withdrawn into a wondrous depth,  
Far sinking into splendor—without end !  
Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,  
With alabaster domes, and silver spires,  
And blazing terrace upon terrace, high  
Uplifted ; here, serene pavilions bright,  
In avenues disposed ; there, towers begirt  
With battlements that on their restless fronts  
Bore stars—illumination of all gems !  
By earthly nature had the effect been wrought  
Upon the dark materials of the storm  
Now pacified ; on them, and on the coves  
And mountain-steeps and summits, whereunto  
The vapours had receded, taking there  
Their station under a cerulean sky.  
Oh, 'twas an unimaginable sight !  
Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks and emerald turf,  
Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky,  
Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,  
Molten together, and composing thus,  
Each lost in each, that marvellous array  
Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge  
Fantastic pomp of structure without name,  
In fleecy folds voluminous, enwrapped.  
Right in the midst, where interspace appeared

Of open court, an object like a throne  
Under a shining canopy of state  
Stood fixed ; and fixed resemblances were seen  
To implements of ordinary use,  
But vast in size, in substance glorified ;  
Such as by Hebrew Prophets were beheld  
In vision—forms uncouth of mightiest power  
For admiration and mysterious awe.  
Below me was the earth ; this little vale  
Lay low beneath my feet ; 'twas visible—  
I saw not, but I felt that it was there.  
That which I *saw* was the revealed abode  
Of Spirits in beatitude : my heart  
Swelled in my breast.—‘ I have been dead,’ I cried,  
‘ And now I live ! Oh ! wherefore *do* I live ?’  
And with that pang I prayed to be no more !—  
—But I forget our Charge, as utterly  
I then forgot him :—there I stood and gazed :  
The apparition faded not away,  
And I descended.

Having reached the house,  
I found its rescued inmate safely lodged,  
And in serene possession of himself,  
Beside a fire whose genial warmth seemed met  
By a faint shining from the heart, a gleam  
Of comfort spread over his pallid face.  
Great show of joy the housewife made, and truly  
Was glad to find her conscience set at ease ;  
And not less glad, for sake of her good name,

That the poor Sufferer had escaped with life.  
But, though he seemed at first to have received  
No harm, and uncomplaining as before  
Went through his usual tasks, a silent change  
Soon showed itself : he lingered three short weeks ;  
And from the cottage hath been borne to-day.

So ends my dolorous tale, and glad I am  
That it is ended." At these words he turned—  
And, with blithe air of open fellowship,  
Brought from the cupboard wine and stouter cheer,  
Like one who would be merry. Seeing this,  
My grey-haired Friend said courteously—"Nay, nay,  
You have regaled us as a hermit ought ;  
Now let us forth into the sun !"—Our Host  
Rose, though reluctantly, and forth we went.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.



# THE EXCURSION.



## BOOK III.

### DESPONDENCY.

## ARGUMENT.

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## BOOK THIRD.

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### DESPONDENCY.

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A HUMMING BEE—a little tinkling rill—  
A pair of falcons, wheeling on the wing,  
In clamorous agitation, round the crest  
Of a tall rock, their airy citadel—  
By each and all of these the pensive ear  
Was greeted, in the silence that ensued,  
When through the cottage-threshold we had passed,  
And, deep within that lonesome valley stood  
Once more, beneath the concave of a blue  
And cloudless sky.—“Anon!” exclaimed our Host,  
Triumphantly dispersing with the taunt  
The shade of discontent which on his brow  
Had gathered,—“Ye have left my cell,—but see  
How Nature hems you in with friendly arms!  
And by her help ye are my prisoners still.  
But which way shall I lead you?—how contrive,  
In spot so parsimoniously endowed,

That the brief hours, which yet remain, may reap  
Some recompense of knowledge or delight ?”  
So saying, round he looked, as if perplexed ;  
And, to remove those doubts, my grey-haired Friend  
Said—“ Shall we take this pathway for our guide ?—  
Upward it winds, as if, in summer heats,  
Its line had first been fashioned by the flock  
Seeking a place of refuge at the root  
Of yon black yew-tree, whose protruded boughs  
Darken the silver bosom of the crag,  
From which she draws her meagre sustenance.  
There in commodious shelter may we rest.  
Or let us trace this streamlet to his source ;  
Feebly it tinkles with an earthy sound,  
And a few steps may bring us to the spot  
Where, haply, crowned with flowerets and green herbs,  
The mountain infant to the sun comes forth,  
Like human life from darkness.”—A quick turn  
Through a strait passage of encumbered ground,  
Proved that such hope was vain :—for now we stood  
Shut out from prospect of the open vale,  
And saw the water, that composed this rill,  
Descending, disembodied, and diffused  
O’er the smooth surface of an ample crag,  
Lofty, and steep, and naked as a tower.  
All further progress here was barred ;—And who,  
Thought I, if master of a vacant hour,  
Here would not linger, willingly detained ?  
Whether to such wild objects he were led

When copious rains have magnified the stream  
Into a loud and white-robed waterfall,  
Or introduced at this more quiet time.

Upon a semicirque of turf-clad ground,  
The hidden nook discovered to our view  
A mass of rock, resembling, as it lay  
Right at the foot of that moist precipice,  
A stranded ship, with keel upturned, that rests  
Fearless of winds and waves. Three several stones  
Stood near, of smaller size, and not unlike  
To monumental pillars : and, from these  
Some little space disjoined, a pair were seen,  
That with united shoulders bore aloft  
A fragment, like an altar, flat and smooth :  
Barren the tablet, yet thereon appeared  
A tall and shining holly, that had found  
A hospitable chink, and stood upright,  
As if inserted by some human hand  
In mockery, to wither in the sun,  
Or lay its beauty flat before a breeze,  
The first that entered. But no breeze did now  
Find entrance ;—high or low appeared no trace  
Of motion, save the water that descended,  
Diffused adown that barrier of steep rock,  
And softly creeping, like a breath of air,  
Such as is sometimes seen, and hardly seen,  
To brush the still breast of a crystal lake.

“Behold a cabinet for sages built,  
Which kings might envy!”—Praise to this effect  
Broke from the happy old Man’s reverend lip ;  
Who to the Solitary turned, and said,  
“In sooth, with love’s familiar privilege,  
You have decried the wealth which is your own.  
Among these rocks and stones, methinks, I see  
More than the heedless impress that belongs  
To lonely nature’s casual work : they bear  
A semblance strange of power intelligent,  
And of design not wholly worn away.  
Boldest of plants that ever faced the wind,  
How gracefully that slender shrub looks forth  
From its fantastic birth-place ! And I own,  
Some shadowy intimations haunt me here,  
That in these shows a chronicle survives  
Of purposes akin to those of Man,  
But wrought with mightier arm than now prevails.  
—Voiceless the stream descends into the gulf  
With timid lapse ;—and lo ! while in this strait  
I stand—the chasm of sky above my head  
Is heaven’s profoundest azure ; no domain  
For fickle, short-lived clouds to occupy,  
Or to pass through ; but rather an abyss  
In which the everlasting stars abide ;  
And whose soft gloom, and boundless depth, might tempt  
The curious eye to look for them by day.  
—Hail Contemplation ! from the stately towers,  
Reared by the industrious hand of human art

To lift thee high above the misty air  
And turbulence of murmuring cities vast ;  
From academic groves, that have for thee  
Been planted, hither come and find a lodge  
To which thou mayest resort for holier peace,—  
From whose calm centre thou, through height or depth,  
Mayest penetrate, wherever truth shall lead ;  
Measuring through all degrees, until the scale  
Of time and conscious nature disappear,  
Lost in unsearchable eternity !”

A pause ensued ; and with minuter care  
We scanned the various features of the scene :  
And soon the Tenant of that lonely vale  
With courteous voice thus spake—

“ I should have grieved

Hereafter, not escaping self-reproach,  
If from my poor retirement ye had gone  
Leaving this nook unvisited : but, in sooth,  
Your unexpected presence had so roused  
My spirits, that they were bent on enterprise ;  
And, like an ardent hunter, I forgot,  
Or, shall I say ?—disdained, the game that lurks  
At my own door. The shapes before our eyes  
And their arrangement, doubtless must be deemed  
The sport of Nature, aided by blind Chance  
Rudely to mock the works of toiling Man.  
And hence, this upright shaft of unhewn stone,  
From Fancy, willing to set off her stores

By sounding titles, hath acquired the name  
Of Pompey's pillar ; that I gravely style  
My Theban obelisk ; and, there, behold  
A Druid cromlech !—thus I entertain  
The antiquarian humour, and am pleased  
To skim along the surfaces of things,  
Beguiling harmlessly the listless hours.  
But if the spirit be oppressed by sense  
Of instability, revolt, decay,  
And change, and emptiness, these freaks of Nature  
And her blind helper Chance, do *then* suffice  
To quicken, and to aggravate—to feed  
Pity and scorn, and melancholy pride,  
Not less than that huge Pile (from some abyss  
Of mortal power unquestionably sprung)  
Whose hoary diadem of pendent rocks  
Confines the shrill-voiced whirlwind, round and round  
Eddying within its vast circumference,  
On Sarum's naked plain ;—than pyramid  
Of Egypt, unsubverted, undissolved ;  
Or Syria's marble ruins towering high  
Above the sandy desert, in the light  
Of sun or moon.—Forgive me, if I say  
That an appearance which hath raised your minds  
To an exalted pitch (the self-same cause  
Different effect producing) is for me  
Fraught rather with depression than delight,  
Though shame it were, could I not look around,  
By the reflection of your pleasure, pleased.

Yet happier in my judgment, even than you  
With your bright transports fairly may be deemed,  
The wandering Herbalist,—who, clear alike  
From vain, and, that worse evil, vexing thoughts,  
Casts, if he ever chance to enter here,  
Upon these uncouth Forms a slight regard  
Of transitory interest, and peeps round  
For some rare floweret of the hills, or plant  
Of craggy fountain ; what he hopes for wins,  
Or learns, at least, that 'tis not to be won :  
Then, keen and eager, as a fine-nosed hound  
By soul-engrossing instinct driven along  
Through wood or open field, the harmless Man  
Departs, intent upon his onward quest !—  
Nor is that Fellow-wanderer, so deem I,  
Less to be envied, (you may trace him oft  
By scars which his activity has left  
Beside our roads and pathways, though, thank Heaven !  
This covert nook reports not of his hand)  
He who with pocket-hammer smites the edge  
Of luckless rock or prominent stone, disguised  
In weather-stains or crusted o'er by Nature  
With her first growths, detaching by the stroke  
A chip or splinter—to resolve his doubts ;  
And, with that ready answer satisfied,  
The substance classes by some barbarous name,  
And hurries on ; or from the fragments picks  
His specimen, if haply interveined  
With sparkling mineral, or should crystal cube

Lurk in its cells—and thinks himself enriched,  
Wealthier, and doubtless wiser, than before !  
Intrusted safely each to his pursuit,  
Earnest alike, let both from hill to hill  
Range ; if it please them, speed from clime to clime ;  
The mind is full—no pain is in their sport.”

“Then,” said I, interposing, “One is near,  
Who cannot but possess in your esteem  
Place worthier still of envy. May I name,  
Without offence, that fair-faced cottage-boy ?  
Dame Nature’s pupil of the lowest form,  
Youngest apprentice in the school of art !  
Him, as we entered from the open glen,  
You might have noticed, busily engaged,  
Heart, soul, and hands,—in mending the defects  
Left in the fabric of a leaky dam  
Raised for enabling this penurious stream  
To turn a slender mill (that new-made plaything)  
For his delight—the happiest he of all !”

“Far happiest,” answered the desponding Man,  
“If, such as now he is, he might remain !  
Ah ! what avails imagination high  
Or question deep ? what profits all that earth,  
Or heaven’s blue vault, is suffered to put forth  
Of impulse or allurements, for the Soul  
To quit the beaten track of life, and soar  
Far as she finds a yielding element



In past or future ; far as she can go  
Through time or space—if neither in the one,  
Nor in the other region, nor in aught  
That Fancy, dreaming o'er the map of things,  
Hath placed beyond these penetrable bounds,  
Words of assurance can be heard ; if nowhere  
A habitation, for consummate good,  
Nor for progressive virtue, by the search  
Can be attained,—a better sanctuary  
From doubt and sorrow, than the senseless grave ?”

“ Is this,” the grey-haired Wanderer mildly said,  
“ The voice, which we so lately overheard,  
To that same child, addressing tenderly  
The consolations of a hopeful mind ?  
*‘ His body is at rest, his soul in heaven.’*  
These were your words ; and, verily, methinks  
Wisdom is oft-times nearer when we stoop  
Than when we soar.”—

The Other, not displeased,  
Promptly replied—“ My notion is the same.  
And I, without reluctance, could decline  
All act of inquisition whence we rise,  
And what, when breath hath ceased, we may become.  
Here are we, in a bright and breathing world.  
Our origin, what matters it ? In lack  
Of worthier explanation, say at once  
With the American (a thought which suits

The place where now we stand) that certain men  
Leapt out together from a rocky cave ;  
And these were the first parents of mankind :  
Or, if a different image be recalled  
By the warm sunshine, and the jocund voice  
Of insects chirping out their careless lives  
On these soft beds of thyme-besprinkled turf,  
Choose, with the gay Athenian, a conceit  
As sound—blithe race ! whose mantles were bedecked  
With golden grasshoppers, in sign that they  
Had sprung, like those bright creatures, from the soil  
Whereon their endless generations dwelt.  
But stop !—these theoretic fancies jar  
On serious minds ; then, as the Hindoos draw  
Their holy Ganges from a skiey fount,  
Even so deduce the stream of human life  
From seats of power divine ; and hope, or trust,  
That our existence winds her stately course  
Beneath the sun, like Ganges, to make part  
Of a living ocean ; or, to sink engulfed,  
Like Niger, in impenetrable sands  
And utter darkness : thought which may be faced,  
Though comfortless !—

Not of myself I speak ;

Such acquiescence neither doth imply,  
In me, a meekly-bending spirit soothed  
By natural piety ; nor a lofty mind,  
By philosophic discipline prepared  
For calm subjection to acknowledged law ;

Pleased to have been, contented not to be.  
Such palms I boast not ;—no ! to me, who find,  
Reviewing my past way, much to condemn,  
Little to praise, and nothing to regret,  
(Save some remembrances of dream-like joys  
That scarcely seem to have belonged to me)  
If I must take my choice between the pair  
That rule alternately the weary hours,  
Night is than day more acceptable ; sleep  
Doth, in my estimate of good, appear  
A better state than waking ; death than sleep :  
Feelingly sweet is stillness after storm,  
Though under covert of the wormy ground !

Yet be it said, in justice to myself,  
That in more genial times, when I was free  
To explore the destiny of human kind  
(Not as an intellectual game pursued  
With curious subtilty, from wish to cheat  
Irrksome sensations ; but by love of truth  
Urged on, or haply by intense delight  
In feeding thought, wherever thought could feed)  
I did not rank with those (too dull or nice,  
For to my judgment such they then appeared,  
Or too aspiring, thankless at the best)  
Who, in this frame of human life, perceive  
An object whereunto their souls are tied  
In discontented wedlock ; nor did e'er,  
From me, those dark impervious shades, that hang

Upon the region whither we are bound,  
Exclude a power to enjoy the vital beams  
Of present sunshine.—Deities that float  
On wings, angelic Spirits, I could muse  
O'er what from eldest time we have been told  
Of your bright forms and glorious faculties,  
And with the imagination be content,  
Not wishing more ; repining not to tread  
The little sinuous path of earthly care,  
By flowers embellished, and by springs refreshed.  
—‘ Blow winds of autumn !—let your chilling breath  
‘ Take the live herbage from the mead, and strip  
‘ The shady forest of its green attire,—  
‘ And let the bursting clouds to fury rouse  
‘ The gentle brooks !—Your desolating sway,  
‘ Sheds,’ I exclaimed, ‘ no sadness upon me,  
‘ And no disorder in your rage I find.  
‘ What dignity, what beauty, in this change  
‘ From mild to angry, and from sad to gay,  
‘ Alternate and revolving ! How benign,  
‘ How rich in animation and delight,  
‘ How bountiful these elements—compared  
‘ With aught, as more desirable and fair,  
‘ Devised by fancy for the golden age ;  
‘ Or the perpetual warbling that prevails  
‘ In Arcady, beneath unaltered skies,  
‘ Through the long year in constant quiet bound,  
‘ Night hushed as night, and day serene as day !’  
—But why this tedious record ?—Age, we know,

Is garrulous ; and solitude is apt  
To anticipate the privilege of Age.  
From far ye come ; and surely with a hope  
Of better entertainment :—let us hence !”

Loth to forsake the spot, and still more loth  
To be diverted from our present theme,  
I said, “ My thoughts agreeing, Sir, with yours,  
Would push this censure farther ;—for, if smiles  
Of scornful pity be the just reward  
Of Poesy thus courteously employed  
In framing models to improve the scheme  
Of Man’s existence, and recast the world,  
Why should not grave Philosophy be styled,  
Herself, a dreamer of a kindred stock,  
A dreamer yet more spiritless and dull ?  
Yes, shall the fine immunities she boasts  
Establish sounder titles of esteem  
For her, who (all too timid and reserved  
For onset, for resistance too inert,  
Too weak for suffering, and for hope too tame)  
Placed, among flowery gardens curtained round  
With world-excluding groves, the brotherhood  
Of soft Epicureans, taught—if they  
The ends of being would secure, and win  
The crown of wisdom—to yield up their souls  
To a voluptuous unconcern, preferring  
Tranquillity to all things. Or is she,”  
I cried, “ more worthy of regard, the Power,

Who, for the sake of sterner quiet, closed  
The Stoic's heart against the vain approach  
Of admiration, and all sense of joy ?”

His countenance gave notice that my zeal  
Accorded little with his present mind ;  
I ceased, and he resumed.—“ Ah ! gentle Sir,  
Slight, if you will, the *means* ; but spare to slight  
The *end* of those, who did, by system, rank,  
As the prime object of a wise man's aim,  
Security from shock of accident,  
Release from fear ; and cherished peaceful days  
For their own sakes, as mortal life's chief good,  
And only reasonable felicity.  
What motive drew, what impulse, I would ask,  
Through a long course of later ages, drove  
The hermit to his cell in forest wide ;  
Or what detained him, till his closing eyes  
Took their last farewell of the sun and stars,  
Fast anchored in the desert ?—Not alone  
Dread of the persecuting sword, remorse,  
Wrongs unredressed, or insults unavenged  
And unavengeable, defeated pride,  
Prosperity subverted, maddening want,  
Friendship betrayed, affection unreturned,  
Love with despair, or grief in agony ;—  
Not always from intolerable pangs  
He fled ; but, compassed round by pleasure, sighed  
For independent happiness ; craving peace,

The central feeling of all happiness,  
Not as a refuge from distress or pain,  
A breathing-time, vacation, or a truce,  
But for its absolute self; a life of peace,  
Stability without regret or fear ;  
That hath been, is, and shall be evermore !—  
Such the reward he sought ; and wore out life,  
There, where on few external things his heart  
Was set, and those his own ; or, if not his,  
Subsisting under nature's steadfast law.

What other yearning was the master tie  
Of the monastic brotherhood, upon rock  
Aërial, or in green secluded vale,  
One after one, collected from afar,  
An undissolving fellowship ?—What but this,  
The universal instinct of repose,  
The longing for confirmed tranquillity,  
Inward and outward ; humble, yet sublime :  
The life where hope and memory are as one ;  
Earth quiet and unchanged ; the human soul  
Consistent in self-rule ; and heaven revealed  
To meditation in that quietness !—  
Such was their scheme : thrice happy he who gained  
The end proposed ! And, though the same were missed  
By multitudes, perhaps obtained by none,  
They, for the attempt, and for the pains employed,  
Do, in my present censure, stand redeemed  
From the unqualified disdain, that once

Would have been cast upon them by my voice  
Delivering her decisions from the seat  
Of forward youth—that scruples not to solve  
Doubts, and determine questions, by the rules  
Of inexperienced judgment, ever prone  
To overweening faith ; and is inflamed,  
By courage, to demand from real life  
The test of act and suffering, to provoke  
Hostility—how dreadful when it comes,  
Whether affliction be the foe, or guilt !

A child of earth, I rested, in that stage  
Of my past course to which these thoughts advert,  
Upon earth's native energies ; forgetting  
That mine was a condition which required  
Nor energy, nor fortitude—a calm  
Without vicissitude ; which, if the like  
Had been presented to my view elsewhere,  
I might have even been tempted to despise.  
But no—for the serene was also bright ;  
Enlivened happiness with joy o'erflowing,  
With joy, and—oh ! that memory should survive  
To speak the word—with rapture ! Nature's boon,  
Life's genuine inspiration, happiness  
Above what rules can teach, or fancy feign ;  
Abused, as all possessions *are* abused  
That are not prized according to their worth.  
And yet, what worth ? what good is given to men,  
More solid than the gilded clouds of heaven ?



What joy more lasting than a vernal flower?—  
None ! 'tis the general plaint of human kind  
In solitude : and mutually addressed  
From each to all, for wisdom's sake :—This truth  
The priest announces from his holy seat :  
And, crowned with garlands in the summer grove,  
The poet fits it to his pensive lyre.  
Yet, ere that final resting-place be gained,  
Sharp contradictions may arise by doom  
Of this same life, compelling us to grieve  
That the prosperities of love and joy  
Should be permitted, oft-times, to endure  
So long, and be at once cast down for ever.  
Oh ! tremble, ye, to whom hath been assigned  
A course of days composing happy months,  
And they as happy years ; the present still  
So like the past, and both so firm a pledge  
Of a congenial future, that the wheels  
Of pleasure move without the aid of hope :  
For Mutability is Nature's bane ;  
And slighted Hope *will* be avenged ; and, when  
Ye need her favours, ye shall find her not ;  
But in her stead—fear—doubt—and agony !”

This was the bitter language of the heart :  
But, while he spake, look, gesture, tone of voice,  
Though discomposed and vehement, were such  
As skill and graceful nature might suggest  
To a proficient of the tragic scene

Standing before the multitude, beset  
With dark events. Desirous to divert  
Or stem the current of the speaker's thoughts,  
We signified a wish to leave that place  
Of stillness and close privacy, a nook  
That seemed for self-examination made;  
Or, for confession, in the sinner's need,  
Hidden from all men's view. To our attempt  
He yielded not ; but pointing to a slope  
Of mossy turf defended from the sun,  
And on that couch inviting us to rest,  
Full on that tender-hearted Man he turned  
A serious eye, and his speech thus renewed.

You never saw, your eyes did never look  
On the bright form of Her whom once I loved :—  
Her silver voice was heard upon the earth,  
A sound unknown to you ; else, honoured Friend!  
Your heart had borne a pitiable share  
Of what I suffered, when I wept that loss,  
And suffer now, not seldom, from the thought  
That I remember, and can weep no more.—  
Stripped as I am of all the golden fruit  
Of self-esteem ; and by the cutting blasts  
Of self-reproach familiarly assailed ;  
Yet would I not be of such wintry bareness  
But that some leaf of your regard should hang  
Upon my naked branches :—lively thoughts  
Give birth, full often, to unguarded words ;

I grieve that, in your presence, from my tongue  
Too much of frailty hath already dropped ;  
But that too much demands still more.

You know,

Revered Compatriot ;—and to you, kind Sir,  
(Not to be deemed a stranger, as you come  
Following the guidance of these welcome feet  
To our secluded vale) it may be told,—  
That my demerits did not sue in vain  
To One on whose mild radiance many gazed  
With hope, and all with pleasure. This fair Bride,  
In the devotedness of youthful love,  
Preferring me to parents, and the choir  
Of gay companions, to the natal roof,  
And all known places and familiar sights  
(Resigned with sadness gently weighing down  
Her trembling expectations, but no more  
Than did to her due honour, and to me  
Yielded, that day, a confidence sublime  
In what I had to build upon)—this Bride,  
Young, modest, meek, and beautiful, I led  
To a low cottage in a sunny bay,  
Where the salt sea innocuously breaks,  
And the sea breeze as innocently breathes,  
On Devon's leafy shores ;—a sheltered hold,  
In a soft clime encouraging the soil  
To a luxuriant bounty !—As our steps  
Approach the embowered abode—our chosen seat—  
See, rooted in the earth, her kindly bed,

The unendangered myrtle, decked with flowers,  
Before the threshold stands to welcome us !  
While, in the flowering myrtle's neighbourhood,  
Not overlooked but courting no regard,  
Those native plants, the holly and the yew,  
Gave modest intimation to the mind  
How willingly their aid they would unite  
With the green myrtle, to endear the hours  
Of winter, and protect that pleasant place.  
—Wild were the walks upon those lonely Downs,  
Track leading into track ; how marked, how worn  
Into bright verdure, between fern and gorse,  
Winding away its never ending line  
On their smooth surface, evidence was none :  
But, there, lay open to our daily haunt,  
A range of unappropriated earth,  
Where youth's ambitious feet might move at large ;  
Whence, unmolested wanderers, we beheld  
The shining giver of the day diffuse  
His brightness o'er a tract of sea and land  
Gay as our spirits, free as our desires ;  
As our enjoyments, boundless.—From those heights  
We dropped, at pleasure, into sylvan combs ;  
Where arbours of impenetrable shade,  
And mossy seats, detained us side by side,  
With hearts at ease, and knowledge in our hearts  
' That all the grove and all the day was ours.'

But Nature called my Partner to resign  
Her share in the pure freedom of that life,

Enjoyed by us in common.—To my hope,  
To my heart's wish, my tender Mate became  
The thankful captive of maternal bonds ;  
And those wild paths were left to me alone.  
There could I meditate on follies past ;  
And, like a weary voyager escaped  
From risk and hardship, inwardly retrace  
A course of vain delights and thoughtless guilt,  
And self-indulgence—without shame pursued.  
There, undisturbed, could think of and could thank  
Her whose submissive spirit was to me  
Rule and restraint—my guardian—shall I say  
That earthly Providence, whose guiding love  
Within a port of rest had lodged me safe ;  
Safe from temptation, and from danger far ?  
Strains followed of acknowledgment addressed  
To an Authority enthroned above  
The reach of sight ; from whom, as from their source,  
Proceed all visible ministers of good  
That walk the earth—Father of heaven and earth,  
Father, and king, and judge, adored and feared !  
These acts of mind, and memory, and heart,  
And spirit—interrupted and relieved  
By observations transient as the glance  
Of flying sunbeams, or to the outward form  
Cleaving with power inherent and intense,  
As the mute insect fixed upon the plant  
On whose soft leaves it hangs, and from whose cup  
Draws imperceptibly its nourishment—

Endeared my wanderings ; and the mother's kiss  
And infant's smile awaited my return.

In privacy we dwelt, a wedded pair,  
Companions daily, often all day long ;  
Not placed by fortune within easy reach  
Of various intercourse, nor wishing aught  
Beyond the allowance of our own fire-side,  
The twain within our happy cottage born,  
Inmates, and heirs of our united love ;  
Graced mutually by difference of sex,  
By the endearing names of nature bound,  
And with no wider interval of time  
Between their several births than served for one  
To establish something of a leader's sway ;  
Yet left them joined by sympathy in age ;  
Equals in pleasure, fellows in pursuit.  
On these two pillars rested as in air  
Our solitude.

It soothes me to perceive,  
Your courtesy withholds not from my words  
Attentive audience. But, oh ! gentle Friends,  
As times of quiet and unbroken peace  
Though, for a nation, times of blessedness,  
Give back faint echoes from the historian's page ;  
So, in the imperfect sounds of this discourse,  
Depressed I hear, how faithless is the voice  
Which those most blissful days reverberate.  
What special record can, or need, be given

To rules and habits, whereby much was done,  
But all within the sphere of little things ;  
Of humble, though, to us, important cares,  
And precious interests ? Smoothly did our life  
Advance, swerving not from the path prescribed ;  
Her annual, her diurnal round alike  
Maintained with faithful care. And you divine  
The worst effects that our condition saw  
If you imagine changes slowly wrought,  
And in their progress imperceptible ;  
Not wished for ; sometimes noticed with a sigh,  
(Whate'er of good or lovely they might bring)  
Sighs of regret, for the familiar good  
And loveliness endeared which they removed.

Seven years of occupation undisturbed  
Established seemingly a right to hold  
That happiness ; and use and habit gave  
To what an alien spirit had acquired  
A patrimonial sanctity. And thus,  
With thoughts and wishes bounded to this world,  
I lived and breathed ; most grateful, if to enjoy  
Without repining or desire for more,  
For different lot, or change to higher sphere,  
(Only except some impulses of pride  
With no determined object, though upheld  
By theories with suitable support)  
Most grateful, if in such wise to enjoy  
Be proof of gratitude for what we have ;

If fixed or wandering star could tidings yield  
Of the departed spirit—what abode  
It occupies—what consciousness retains  
Of former loves and interests. Then my soul  
Turned inward,—to examine of what stuff  
Time's fetters are composed ; and life was put  
To inquisition, long and profitless !  
By pain of heart—now checked—and now impelled—  
The intellectual power, through words and things,  
Went sounding on, a dim and perilous way !  
And from those transports, and these toils abstruse,  
Some trace am I enabled to retain  
Of time, else lost ;—existing unto me  
Only by records in myself not found.

From that abstraction I was roused,—and how ?  
Even as a thoughtful shepherd by a flash  
Of lightning startled in a gloomy cave  
Of these wild hills. For, lo ! the dread Bastile,  
With all the chambers in its horrid towers,  
Fell to the ground :—by violence o'erthrown  
Of indignation ; and with shouts that drowned  
The crash it made in falling ! From the wreck  
A golden palace rose, or seemed to rise,  
The appointed seat of equitable law  
And mild paternal sway. The potent shock  
I felt : the transformation I perceived,  
As marvellously seized as in that moment  
When, from the blind mist issuing, I beheld



Glory—beyond all glory ever seen,  
Confusion infinite of heaven and earth,  
Dazzling the soul. Meanwhile, prophetic harps  
In every grove were ringing, ‘ War shall cease ;  
‘ Did ye not hear that conquest is abjured ?  
‘ Bring garlands, bring forth choicest flowers, to deck  
‘ The tree of Liberty.’—My heart rebounded ;  
My melancholy voice the chorus joined ;  
—‘ Be joyful all ye nations, in all lands,  
‘ Ye that are capable of joy be glad !  
‘ Henceforth, whate’er is wanting to yourselves  
‘ In others ye shall promptly find ;—and all,  
‘ Enriched by mutual and reflected wealth,  
‘ Shall with one heart honour their common kind.’

Thus was I reconverted to the world ;  
Society became my glittering bride,  
And airy hopes my children.—From the depths  
Of natural passion, seemingly escaped,  
My soul diffused herself in wide embrace  
Of institutions, and the forms of things ;  
As they exist, in mutable array,  
Upon life’s surface. What, though in my veins  
There flowed no Gallic blood, nor had I breathed  
The air of France, not less than Gallic zeal  
Kindled and burnt among the sapless twigs  
Of my exhausted heart. If busy men  
In sober conclave met, to weave a web  
Of amity, whose living threads should stretch

Beyond the seas, and to the farthest pole,  
There did I sit, assisting. If, with noise  
And acclamation, crowds in open air  
Expressed the tumult of their minds, my voice  
There mingled, heard or not. The powers of song  
I left not uninvoked ; and, in still groves,  
Where mild enthusiasts tuned a pensive lay  
Of thanks and expectation, in accord  
With their belief, I sang Saturnian rule  
Returned,—a progeny of golden years  
Permitted to descend, and bless mankind.  
—With promises the Hebrew Scriptures teem :  
I felt the invitation ; and resumed  
A long-suspended office in the House  
Of public worship, where, the glowing phrase  
Of ancient inspiration serving me,  
I promised also,—with undaunted trust  
Foretold, and added prayer to prophecy ;  
The admiration winning of the crowd ;  
The help desiring of the pure devout.

Scorn and contempt forbid me to proceed !  
But History, time's slavish scribe, will tell  
How rapidly the zealots of the cause  
Disbanded—or in hostile ranks appeared ;  
Some, tired of honest service ; these, outdone,  
Disgusted therefore, or appalled, by aims  
Of fiercer zealots—so confusion reigned,  
And the more faithful were compelled to exclaim,

As Brutus did to Virtue, 'Liberty,  
'I worshipped thee, and find thee but a Shade !'

Such recantation had for me no charm,  
Nor would I bend to it ; who should have grieved  
At aught, however fair, that bore the mien  
Of a conclusion, or catastrophe.  
Why then conceal, that, when the simply good  
In timid selfishness withdrew, I sought  
Other support, not scrupulous whence it came ;  
And, by what compromise it stood, not nice ?  
Enough if notions seemed to be high-pitched,  
And qualities determined.—Among men  
So charactered did I maintain a strife  
Hopeless, and still more hopeless every hour ;  
But, in the process, I began to feel  
That, if the emancipation of the world  
Were missed, I should at least secure my own,  
And be in part compensated. For rights,  
Widely—inveterately usurped upon,  
I spake with vehemence ; and promptly seized  
All that Abstraction furnished for my needs  
Or purposes ; nor scrupled to proclaim,  
And propagate, by liberty of life,  
Those new persuasions. Not that I rejoiced,  
Or even found pleasure, in such vagrant course,  
For its own sake ; but farthest from the walk  
Which I had trod in happiness and peace,  
Was most inviting to a troubled mind ;

That, in a struggling and distempered world,  
Saw a seductive image of herself.  
Yet, mark the contradictions of which **Man**  
Is still the sport ! Here Nature was **my** guide,  
The Nature of the dissolute ; but thee,  
O fostering Nature ! I rejected—**smiled**  
At others' tears in pity ; and in scorn  
At those, which thy soft influence sometimes drew  
From my unguarded heart.—The tranquil shores  
Of Britain circumscribed me ; else, perhaps,  
I might have been entangled among deeds,  
Which, now, as infamous, I should abhor—  
Despise, as senseless : for my spirit relished  
Strangely the exasperation of that Land,  
Which turned an angry beak against the down  
Of her own breast ; confounded into hope  
Of disencumbering thus her fretful wings.

But all was quieted by iron bonds  
Of military sway. The shifting aims,  
The moral interests, the creative might,  
The varied functions and high attributes  
Of civil action, yielded to a power  
Formal, and odious, and contemptible.  
—In Britain, ruled a panic dread of change ;  
The weak were praised, rewarded, and advanced ;  
And, from the impulse of a just disdain,  
Once more did I retire into myself.  
There feeling no contentment, I resolved

To fly, for safeguard, to some foreign shore,  
Remote from Europe ; from her blasted hopes ;  
Her fields of carnage, and polluted air.

Fresh blew the wind, when o'er the Atlantic Main  
The ship went gliding with her thoughtless crew ;  
And who among them but an Exile, freed  
From discontent, indifferent, pleased to sit  
Among the busily-employed, not more  
With obligation charged, with service taxed,  
Than the loose pendant—to the idle wind  
Upon the tall mast streaming. But, ye Powers  
Of soul and sense mysteriously allied,  
O, never let the Wretched, if a choice  
Be left him, trust the freight of his distress  
To a long voyage on the silent deep !  
For, like a plague, will memory break out ;  
And, in the blank and solitude of things,  
Upon his spirit, with a fever's strength,  
Will conscience prey.—Feebly must they have felt  
Who, in old time, attired with snakes and whips  
The vengeful Furies. *Beautiful* regards  
Were turned on me—the face of her I loved ;  
The Wife and Mother pitifully fixing  
Tender reproaches, insupportable !  
Where now that boasted liberty ? No welcome  
From unknown objects I received ; and those,  
Known and familiar, which the vaulted sky  
Did, in the placid clearness of the night,

Disclose, had accusations to prefer  
Against my peace. Within the cabin stood  
That volume—as a compass for the soul—  
Revered among the nations. I implored  
Its guidance ; but the infallible support  
Of faith was wanting. Tell me, why refused  
To One by storms annoyed and adverse winds ;  
Perplexed with currents ; of his weakness sick ;  
Of vain endeavours tired ; and by his own,  
And by his nature's, ignorance, dismayed !

Long-wished-for sight, the Western World appeared ;  
And, when the ship was moored, I leaped ashore  
Indignantly—resolved to be a man,  
Who, having o'er the past no power, would live  
No longer in subjection to the past,  
With abject mind—from a tyrannic lord  
Inviting penance, fruitlessly endured.  
So, like a fugitive, whose feet have cleared  
Some boundary, which his followers may not cross  
In prosecution of their deadly chase,  
Respiring I looked round.—How bright the sun,  
How promising the breeze ! Can aught produced  
In the old World compare, thought I, for power  
And majesty with this gigantic stream,  
Sprung from the desert ? And behold a city  
Fresh, youthful, and aspiring ! What are these  
To me, or I to them ? As much at least  
As he desires that they should be, whom winds

And waves have wafted to this distant shore,  
In the condition of a damaged seed,  
Whose fibres cannot, if they would, take root.  
Here may I roam at large ;—my business is,  
Roaming at large, to observe, and not to feel ;  
And, therefore, not to act—convinced that all  
Which bears the name of action, howsoe'er  
Beginning, ends in servitude—still painful,  
And mostly profitless. And, sooth to say,  
On nearer view, a motley spectacle  
Appeared, of high pretensions—unreproved  
But by the obstreperous voice of higher still ;  
Big passions strutting on a petty stage ;  
Which a detached spectator may regard  
Not unamused.—But ridicule demands  
Quick change of objects ; and, to laugh alone,  
At a composing distance from the haunts  
Of strife and folly, though it be a treat  
As choice as musing Leisure can bestow ;  
Yet in the very centre of the crowd,  
To keep the secret of a poignant scorn,  
Howe'er to airy Demons suitable,  
Of all unsocial courses, is least fit  
For the gross spirit of mankind,—the one  
That soonest fails to please, and quickest turns  
Into vexation.

Let us, then, I said,  
Leave this unknit Republic to the scourge  
Of her own passions ; and to regions haste,

Whose shades have never felt the encroaching axe,  
Or soil endured a transfer in the mart  
Of dire rapacity. There, Man abides,  
Primeval Nature's child. A creature weak  
In combination, (wherefore else driven back  
So far, and of his old inheritance  
So easily deprived ?) but, for that cause,  
More dignified, and stronger in himself ;  
Whether to act, judge, suffer, or enjoy.  
True, the intelligence of social art  
Hath overpowered his forefathers, and soon  
Will sweep the remnant of his line away ;  
But contemplations, worthier, nobler far  
Than her destructive energies, attend  
His independence, when along the side  
Of Mississippi, or that northern stream  
That spreads into successive seas, he walks ;  
Pleased to perceive his own unshackled life,  
And his innate capacities of soul,  
There imaged : or, when having gained the top  
Of some commanding eminence, which yet  
Intruder ne'er beheld, he thence surveys  
Regions of wood and wide savannah, vast  
Expanse of unappropriated earth,  
With mind that sheds a light on what he sees ;  
Free as the sun, and lonely as the sun,  
Pouring above his head its radiance down  
Upon a living, and rejoicing world !



So, westward, toward the unviolated woods  
I bent my way ; and, roaming far and wide,  
Failed not to greet the merry Mocking-bird ;  
And, while the melancholy Muccawiss  
(The sportive bird's companion in the grove)  
Repeated, o'er and o'er, his plaintive cry,  
I sympathized at leisure with the sound ;  
But that pure archetype of human greatness,  
I found him not. There, in his stead, appeared  
A creature, squalid, vengeful, and impure ;  
Remorseless, and submissive to no law  
But superstitious fear, and abject sloth.

Enough is told ! Here am I—ye have heard  
What evidence I seek, and vainly seek ;  
What from my fellow-beings I require,  
And cannot find ; what I myself have lost,  
Nor can regain : how languidly I look  
Upon this visible fabric of the world,  
May be divined—perhaps it hath been said :—  
But spare your pity, if there be in me  
Aught that deserves respect : for I exist,  
Within myself, not comfortless.—The tenour  
Which my life holds, he readily may conceive  
Whoe'er hath stood to watch a mountain brook  
In some still passage of its course, and seen,  
Within the depths of its capacious breast,  
Inverted trees, rocks, clouds, and azure sky ;  
And, on its glassy surface, specks of foam,

And conglobated bubbles undissolved,  
Numerous as stars ; that, by their onward lapse,  
Betray to sight the motion of the stream,  
Else imperceptible. Meanwhile, is heard  
A softened roar, or murmur ; and the sound  
Though soothing, and the little floating isles  
Though beautiful, are both by Nature charged  
With the same pensive office ; and make known  
Through what perplexing labyrinths, abrupt  
Precipitations, and untoward straits,  
The earth-born wanderer hath passed ; and quickly,  
That respite o'er, like traverses and toils  
Must be again encountered.—Such a stream  
Is human Life ; and so the Spirit fares  
In the best quiet to her course allowed ;  
And such is mine,—save only for a hope  
That my particular current soon will reach  
The unfathomable gulf, where all is still !”

END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

# THE EXCURSION.

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## BOOK IV.

DESPONDENCY CORRECTED.

## ARGUMENT.

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## BOOK FOURTH.

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### DESPONDENCY CORRECTED.

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HERE closed the Tenant of that lonely vale  
His mournful narrative—commenced in pain,  
In pain commenced, and ended without peace :  
Yet tempered, not unfrequently, with strains  
Of native feeling, grateful to our minds ;  
And doubtless yielding some relief to his,  
While we sate listening with compassion due.  
Such pity yet surviving, with clear voice  
That falter'd not, albeit the heart was moved,  
The Wanderer said :—

“ One adequate support  
For the calamities of mortal life  
Exists—one only ; an assured belief  
That the procession of our fate, howe'er  
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being  
Of infinite benevolence and power ;  
Whose everlasting purposes embrace

All accidents, converting them to good.  
—The darts of anguish *fix* not where the seat  
Of suffering hath been thoroughly fortified  
By acquiescence in the Will supreme  
For time and for eternity ; by faith,  
Faith absolute in God, including hope,  
And the defence that lies in boundless love  
Of his perfections ; with habitual dread  
Of aught unworthily conceived, endured  
Impatiently ; ill-done, or left undone,  
To the dishonour of his holy name.  
Soul of our Souls, and safeguard of the world !  
Sustain, thou only canst, the sick of heart ;  
Restore their languid spirits, and recall  
Their lost affections unto thee and thine !”

Then, as we issued from that covert nook,  
He thus continued, lifting up his eyes  
To heaven :—“ How beautiful this dome of sky ;  
And the vast hills, in fluctuation fixed  
At thy command, how awful ! Shall the Soul,  
Human and rational, report of thee  
Even less than these ?—Be mute who will, who can,  
Yet I will praise thee with impassioned voice :  
My lips, that may forget thee in the crowd,  
Cannot forget thee here ; where thou hast built,  
For thy own glory, in the wilderness !  
Me didst thou constitute a priest of thine,  
In such a temple as we now behold

Reared for thy presence : therefore, am I bound  
To worship, here, and every where—as one  
Not doomed to ignorance, though forced to tread,  
From childhood up, the ways of poverty ;  
From unreflecting ignorance preserved,  
And from debasement rescued.—By thy grace  
The particle divine remained unquenched ;  
And, 'mid the wild weeds of a rugged soil,  
Thy bounty caused to flourish deathless flowers,  
From paradise transplanted : wintry age  
Impends ; the frost will gather round my heart ;  
If the flowers wither, I am worse than dead !  
—Come, labour, when the worn-out frame requires  
Perpetual sabbath ; come, disease and want ;  
And sad exclusion through decay of sense ;  
But leave me unabated trust in thee—  
And let thy favour, to the end of life,  
Inspire me with ability to seek  
Repose and hope among eternal things—  
Father of heaven and earth ! and I am rich,  
And will possess my portion in content !

And what are things eternal?—powers depart,”  
The grey-haired Wanderer steadfastly replied,  
Answering the question which himself had asked,  
“ Possessions vanish, and opinions change,  
And passions hold a fluctuating seat :  
But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,  
And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,

Duty exists ;—immutably survive,  
For our support, the measures and the forms,  
Which an abstract intelligence supplies ;  
Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not.  
Of other converse which mind, soul, and heart,  
Do, with united urgency, require,  
What more that may not perish ?—Thou, dread source,  
Prime, self-existing cause and end of all  
That in the scale of being fill their place ;  
Above our human region, or below,  
Set and sustained ;—thou, who didst wrap the cloud  
Of infancy around us, that thyself,  
Therein, with our simplicity a while  
Might'st hold, on earth, communion undisturbed ;  
Who from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,  
Or from its death-like void, with punctual care,  
And touch as gentle as the morning light,  
Restor'st us, daily, to the powers of sense,  
And reason's steadfast rule—thou, thou alone  
Art everlasting, and the blessed Spirits,  
Which thou includest, as the sea her waves :  
For adoration thou endur'st ; endure  
For consciousness the motions of thy will ;  
For apprehension those transcendent truths  
Of the pure intellect, that stand as laws  
(Submission constituting strength and power)  
Even to thy Being's infinite majesty !  
This universe shall pass away—a work  
Glorious ! because the shadow of thy might,



A step, or link, for intercourse with thee.  
Ah ! if the time must come, in which my feet  
No more shall stray where meditation leads,  
By flowing stream, through wood, or craggy wild,  
Loved haunts like these ; the unimprisoned Mind  
May yet have scope to range among her own,  
Her thoughts, her images, her high desires.  
If the dear faculty of sight should fail,  
Still, it may be allowed me to remember  
What visionary powers of eye and soul  
In youth were mine ; when, stationed on the top  
Of some huge hill—expectant, I beheld  
The sun rise up, from distant climes returned  
Darkness to chase, and sleep ; and bring the day  
His bounteous gift ! or saw him toward the deep  
Sink, with a retinue of flaming clouds  
Attended ; then, my spirit was entranced  
With joy exalted to beatitude ;  
The measure of my soul was filled with bliss,  
And holiest love ; as earth, sea, air, with light,  
With pomp, with glory, with magnificence !

Those fervent raptures are for ever flown ;  
And, since their date, my soul hath undergone  
Change manifold, for better or for worse :  
Yet cease I not to struggle, and aspire  
Heavenward ; and chide the part of me that flags,  
Through sinful choice ; or dread necessity  
On human nature from above imposed.

'Tis, by comparison, an easy task  
Earth to despise ; but, to converse with heaven—  
This is not easy :—to relinquish all  
We have, or hope, of happiness and joy,  
And stand in freedom loosened from this world,  
I deem not arduous ; but must needs confess  
That 'tis a thing impossible to frame  
Conceptions equal to the soul's desires ;  
And the most difficult of tasks to *keep*  
Heights which the soul is competent to gain.  
—Man is of dust : ethereal hopes are his,  
Which, when they should sustain themselves aloft,  
Want due consistence ; like a pillar of smoke,  
That with majestic energy from earth  
Rises ; but, having reached the thinner air,  
Melts, and dissolves, and is no longer seen.  
From this infirmity of mortal kind  
Sorrow proceeds, which else were not ; at least,  
If grief be something hallowed and ordained,  
If, in proportion, it be just and meet,  
Yet, through this weakness of the general heart,  
Is it enabled to maintain its hold  
In that excess which conscience disapproves.  
For who could sink and settle to that point  
Of selfishness ; so senseless who could be  
As long and perseveringly to mourn  
For any object of his love, removed  
From this unstable world, if he could fix  
A satisfying view upon that state

Of pure, imperishable blessedness,  
Which reason promises, and holy writ  
Ensures to all believers?—Yet mistrust  
Is of such incapacity, methinks, .  
No natural branch ; despondency far less ;  
And, least of all, is absolute despair.  
—And, if there be whose tender frames have drooped  
Even to the dust ; apparently, through weight  
Of anguish unrelieved, and lack of power  
An agonizing sorrow to transmute ;  
Deem not that proof is here of hope withheld  
When wanted most ; a confidence impaired  
So pitiously, that, having ceased to see  
With bodily eyes, they are borne down by love  
Of what is lost, and perish through regret.  
Oh ! no, the innocent Sufferer often sees  
Too clearly ; feels too vividly ; and longs  
To realize the vision, with intense  
And over-constant yearning ;—there—there lies  
The excess, by which the balance is destroyed.  
Too, too contracted are these walls of flesh,  
This vital warmth too cold, these visual orbs,  
Though inconceivably endowed, too dim  
For any passion of the soul that leads  
To extasy ; and, all the crooked paths  
Of time and change disdaining, takes its course  
Along the line of limitless desires.  
I, speaking now from such disorder free,  
Nor rapt, nor craving, but in settled peace,

I cannot doubt that they whom you deplore  
Are glorified ; or, if they sleep, shall wake  
From sleep, and dwell with God in endless love.  
Hope, below this, consists not with belief  
In mercy, carried infinite degrees  
Beyond the tenderness of human hearts :  
Hope, below this, consists not with belief  
In perfect wisdom, guiding mightiest power,  
That finds no limits but her own pure will.

Here then we rest ; not fearing for our creed  
The worst that human reasoning can achieve,  
To unsettle or perplex it : yet with pain  
Acknowledging, and grievous self-reproach,  
That, though immovably convinced, we want  
Zeal, and the virtue to exist by faith  
As soldiers live by courage ; as, by strength  
Of heart, the sailor fights with roaring seas.  
Alas ! the endowment of immortal power  
Is matched unequally with custom, time,  
And domineering faculties of sense  
In *all* ; in most with superadded foes,  
Idle temptations ; open vanities,  
Ephemeral offspring of the unblushing world ;  
And, in the private regions of the mind,  
Ill-governed passions, ranklings of despise,  
Immoderate wishes, pining discontent,  
Distress and care. What then remains ?—To seek  
Those helps for his occasions ever near

Who lacks not will to use them ; vows, renewed  
On the first motion of a holy thought ;  
Vigils of contemplation ; praise ; and prayer—  
A stream, which, from the fountain of the heart  
Issuing, however feebly, nowhere flows  
Without access of unexpected strength.  
But, above all, the victory is most sure  
For him, who, seeking faith by virtue, strives  
To yield entire submission to the law  
Of conscience—conscience revered and obeyed,  
As God's most intimate presence in the soul,  
And his most perfect image in the world.  
—Endeavour thus to live ; these rules regard ;  
These helps solicit ; and a steadfast seat  
Shall then be yours among the happy few  
Who dwell on earth, yet breathe empyreal air,  
Sons of the morning. For your nobler part,  
Ere disencumbered of her mortal chains,  
Doubt shall be quelled and trouble chased away ;  
With only such degree of sadness left  
As may support longings of pure desire ;  
And strengthen love, rejoicing secretly  
In the sublime attractions of the grave."

While, in this strain, the venerable Sage  
Poured forth his aspirations, and announced  
His judgments, near that lonely house we paced  
A plot of green-sward, seemingly preserved  
By nature's care from wreck of scattered stones,

And from encroachment of encircling heath :  
Small space ! but, for reiterated steps,  
Smooth and commodious ; as a stately deck  
Which to and fro the mariner is used  
To tread for pastime, talking with his mates,  
Or haply thinking of far-distant friends,  
While the ship glides before a steady breeze.  
Stillness prevailed around us : and the voice  
That spake was capable to lift the soul  
Toward regions yet more tranquil. But, methought,  
That he, whose fixed despondency had given  
Impulse and motive to that strong discourse,  
Was less upraised in spirit than abashed ;  
Shrinking from admonition, like a man  
Who feels that to exhort is to reproach.  
Yet not to be diverted from his aim,  
The Sage continued :—

“ For that other loss,  
The loss of confidence in social man,  
By the unexpected transports of our age  
Carried so high, that every thought, which looked  
Beyond the temporal destiny of the Kind,  
To many seemed superfluous—as, no cause  
For such exalted confidence could e’er  
Exist ; so, none is now for fixed despair :  
The two extremes are equally disowned  
By reason : if, with sharp recoil, from one  
You have been driven far as its opposite,  
Between them seek the point whereon to build

Sound expectations. So doth he advise  
Who shared at first the illusion ; but was soon  
Cast from the pedestal of pride by shocks  
Which Nature gently gave, in woods and fields ;  
Nor unreprieved by Providence, thus speaking  
To the inattentive children of the world :  
‘ Vain-glorious Generation ! what new powers  
‘ On you have been conferred ? what gifts, withheld  
‘ From your progenitors, have ye received,  
‘ Fit recompense of new desert ? what claim  
‘ Are ye prepared to urge, that my decrees  
‘ For you should undergo a sudden change ;  
‘ And the weak functions of one busy day,  
‘ Reclaiming and extirpating, perform  
‘ What all the slowly-moving years of time,  
‘ With their united force, have left undone ?  
‘ By nature’s gradual processes be taught ;  
‘ By story be confounded ! Ye aspire  
‘ Rashly, to fall once more ; and that false fruit,  
‘ Which, to your over-weening spirits, yields  
‘ Hope of a flight celestial, will produce  
‘ Misery and shame. But Wisdom of her sons  
‘ Shall not the less, though late, be justified.’

Such timely warning,” said the Wanderer, “ gave  
That visionary voice ; and, at this day,  
When a Tartarian darkness overspreads  
The groaning nations ; when the impious rule,  
By will or by established ordinance,

Their own dire agents, and constrain the good  
To acts which they abhor ; though I bewail  
This triumph, yet the pity of my heart  
Prevents me not from owning, that the law,  
By which mankind now suffers, is most just.  
For by superior energies ; more strict  
Affiance in each other ; faith more firm  
In their unhallowed principles ; the bad  
Have fairly earned a victory o'er the weak,  
The vacillating, inconsistent good.  
Therefore, not unconsolated, I wait—in hope  
To see the moment, when the righteous cause  
Shall gain defenders zealous and devout  
As they who have opposed her ; in which Virtue  
Will, to her efforts, tolerate no bounds  
That are not lofty as her rights ; aspiring  
By impulse of her own ethereal zeal.  
That spirit only can redeem mankind ;  
And when that sacred spirit shall appear,  
Then shall *our* triumph be complete as theirs.  
Yet, should this confidence prove vain, the wise  
Have still the keeping of their proper peace ;  
Are guardians of their own tranquillity.  
They act, or they recede, observe, and feel ;  
' Knowing the heart of man is set to be  
The centre of this world, about the which  
Those revolutions of disturbances  
Still roll ; where all the aspects of misery  
Predominate ; whose strong effects are such



As he must bear, being powerless to redress ;  
*And that unless above himself he can*  
*Erect himself, how poor a thing is Man ! ' \**

Happy is he who lives to understand,  
Not human nature only, but explores  
All natures,—to the end that he may find  
The law that governs each ; and where begins  
The union, the partition where, that makes  
Kind and degree, among all visible Beings ;  
The constitutions, powers, and faculties,  
Which they inherit,—cannot step beyond,—  
And cannot fall beneath ; that do assign  
To every class its station and its office,  
Through all the mighty commonwealth of things ;  
Up from the creeping plant to sovereign Man.  
Such converse, if directed by a meek,  
Sincere, and humble spirit, teaches love :  
For knowledge is delight ; and such delight  
Breeds love : yet, suited as it rather is  
To thought and to the climbing intellect,  
It teaches less to love, than to adore ;  
If that be not indeed the highest love ! ”

“ Yet,” said I, tempted here to interpose,  
“ The dignity of life is not impaired  
By aught that innocently satisfies  
The humbler cravings of the heart ; and he

Is a still happier man, who, for those heights  
Of speculation not unfit, descends ;  
And such benign affections cultivates  
Among the inferior kinds ; not merely those  
That he may call his own, and which depend,  
As individual objects of regard,  
Upon his care, from whom he also looks  
For signs and tokens of a mutual bond,  
But others, far beyond this narrow sphere,  
Whom, for the very sake of love, he loves.  
Nor is it a mean praise of rural life  
And solitude, that they do favour most,  
Most frequently call forth, and best sustain  
These pure sensations ; that can penetrate  
The obstreperous city ; on the barren seas  
Are not unfelt ; and much might recommend,—  
How much they might inspirit and endear  
The loneliness of this sublime retreat ! ”

“ Yes,” said the Sage, resuming the discourse  
Again directed to his downcast Friend,  
“ If, with the froward will and grovelling soul  
Of man, offended, liberty is here,  
And invitation every hour renewed,  
To mark *their* placid state, who never heard  
Of a command which they have power to break,  
Or rule which they are tempted to transgress :  
These, with a soothed or elevated heart,  
May we behold ; their knowledge register ;

Observe their ways ; and, free from envy, find  
Complacence there :—but wherefore this to you ?  
I guess that, welcome to your lonely hearth,  
The redbreast, ruffled up by winter's cold  
Into a ' feathery bunch,' feeds at your hand :  
A box, perchance, is from your casement hung  
For the small wren to build in ;—not in vain,  
The barriers disregarding that surround  
This deep abiding-place, before your sight  
Mounts on the breeze the butterfly ; and soars,  
Small creature as she is, from earth's bright flowers  
Into the dewy clouds. Ambition reigns  
In the waste wilderness : the Soul ascends  
Drawn towards her native firmament of heaven,  
When the fresh eagle, in the month of May,  
Upborne, at evening, on replenished wing,  
This shaded valley leaves ; and leaves the dark  
Empurpled hills, conspicuously renewing  
A proud communication with the sun  
Low sunk beneath the horizon !—List !—I heard,  
From yon huge breast of rock, a solemn bleat,  
Sent forth as if it were the mountain's voice,  
As if the visible mountain made the cry.  
Again !"—The effect upon the soul was such  
As he expressed : from out the mountain's heart  
The solemn bleat appeared to issue, startling  
The blank air—for the region all around  
Stood silent, empty of all shape of life :

—It was a lamb—left somewhere to itself,  
The plaintive spirit of the solitude !  
He paused, as if unwilling to proceed,  
Through consciousness that silence in such place  
Was best, the most affecting eloquence.  
But soon his thoughts returned upon themselves,  
And, in soft tone of speech, thus he resumed.

“ Ah ! if the heart, too confidently raised,  
Perchance too lightly occupied, or lulled  
Too easily, despise or overlook  
The vassalage that binds her to the earth,  
Her sad dependence upon time, and all  
The trepidations of mortality,  
What place so destitute and void—but there  
The little flower her vanity shall check ;  
The trailing worm reprove her thoughtless pride ?

These craggy regions, these chaotic wilds  
Does that benignity pervade, that warms  
The mole contented with her darksome walk  
In the cold ground : and to the emmet gives  
Her foresight, and intelligence that makes  
The tiny creatures strong by social league ;  
Supports the generations, multiplies  
Their tribes, till we behold a spacious plain  
Or grassy bottom, all, with little hills—  
Their labour, covered, as a lake with waves ;  
Thousands of cities, in the desert place

Built up of life, and food, and means of life !  
Nor wanting here, to entertain the thought,  
Creatures that in communities exist,  
Less, as might seem, for general guardianship  
Or through dependence upon mutual aid,  
Than by participation of delight  
And a strict love of fellowship, combined.  
What other spirit can it be that prompts  
The gilded summer flies to mix and weave  
Their sports together in the solar beam,  
Or in the gloom of twilight hum their joy ?  
More obviously the self-same influence rules  
The feathered kinds ; the fieldfare's pensive flock,  
The cawing rooks, and sea-mews from afar,  
Hovering above these inland solitudes,  
By the rough wind unscattered, at whose call  
Up through the trenches of the long-drawn vales  
Their voyage was begun : nor is its power  
Unfelt among the sedentary fowl  
That seek yon pool, and there prolong their stay  
In silent congress ; or together roused  
Take flight ; while with their clang the air resounds.  
And, over all, in that ethereal vault,  
Is the mute company of changeful clouds ;  
Bright apparition, suddenly put forth,  
The rainbow smiling on the faded storm ;  
The mild assemblage of the starry heavens ;  
And the great sun, earth's universal lord !

How bountiful is Nature ! he shall find  
Who seeks not ; and to him, who hath not asked,  
Large measure shall be dealt. Three sabbath-days  
Are scarcely told, since, on a service bent  
Of mere humanity, you clomb those heights ;  
And what a marvellous and heavenly show  
Was suddenly revealed ! the swains moved on,  
And heeded not : you lingered, you perceived  
And felt, deeply as living man could feel.  
There is a luxury in self-dispraise ;  
And inward self-disparagement affords  
To meditative spleen a grateful feast.  
Trust me, pronouncing on your own desert,  
You judge unthankfully : distempered nerves  
Infect the thoughts : the languor of the frame  
Depresses the soul's vigour. Quit your couch—  
Cleave not so fondly to your moody cell ;  
Nor let the hallowed powers, that shed from heaven  
Stillness and rest, with disapproving eye  
Look down upon your taper, through a watch  
Of midnight hours, unseasonably twinkling  
In this deep Hollow, like a sullen star  
Dimly reflected in a lonely pool.  
Take courage, and withdraw yourself from ways  
That run not parallel to nature's course.  
Rise with the lark ! your matins shall obtain  
Grace, be their composition what it may,  
If but with hers performed ; climb once again,  
Climb every day, those ramparts ; meet the breeze

Upon their tops, adventurous as a bee  
That from your garden thither soars, to feed  
On new-blown heath ; let yon commanding rock  
Be your frequented watch-tower ; roll the stone  
In thunder down the mountains ; with all your might  
Chase the wild goat ; and if the bold red deer  
Fly to those harbours, driven by hound and horn  
Loud echoing, add your speed to the pursuit ;  
So, wearied to your hut shall you return,  
And sink at evening into sound repose."

The Solitary lifted toward the hills  
A kindling eye :—poetic feelings rushed  
Into my bosom, whence these words broke forth :  
" Oh ! what a joy it were, in vigorous health,  
To have a body (this our vital frame  
With shrinking sensibility endued,  
And all the nice regards of flesh and blood)  
And to the elements surrender it  
As if it were a spirit !—How divine,  
The liberty, for frail, for mortal man  
To roam at large among unpeopled glens  
And mountainous retirements, only trod  
By devious footsteps ; regions consecrate  
To oldest time ! and, reckless of the storm  
That keeps the raven quiet in her nest,  
Be as a presence or a motion—one  
Among the many there ; and while the mists  
Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes

And phantoms from the crags and solid earth  
As fast as a musician scatters sounds  
Out of an instrument : and while the streams  
(As at a first creation and in haste  
To exercise their untried faculties)  
Descending from the region of the clouds,  
And starting from the hollows of the earth  
More multitudinous every moment, rend  
Their way before them—what a joy to roam  
An equal among mightiest energies ;  
And haply sometimes with articulate voice,  
Amid the deafening tumult, scarcely heard  
By him that utters it, exclaim aloud,  
' Be this continued so from day to day,  
Nor let the fierce commotion have an end,  
Ruinous though it be, from month to month ! ”

Yes,” said the Wanderer, taking from my lips  
The strain of transport, “ whosoe’er in youth  
Has, through ambition of his soul, given way  
To such desires, and grasped at such delight,  
Shall feel congenial stirrings late and long,  
In spite of all the weakness that life brings,  
Its cares and sorrows ; he, though taught to own  
The tranquillizing power of time, shall wake,  
Wake sometimes to a noble restlessness—  
Loving the sports which once he gloried in.

Compatriot, Friend, remote are Garry’s hills,



The streams far distant of your native glen ;  
Yet is their form and image here expressed  
With brotherly resemblance. Turn your steps  
Wherever fancy leads, by day, by night,  
Are various engines working, not the same  
As those with which your soul in youth was moved,  
But by the great Artificer endowed  
With no inferior power. You dwell alone ;  
You walk, you live, you speculate alone ;  
Yet doth remembrance, like a sovereign prince,  
For you a stately gallery maintain  
Of gay or tragic pictures. You have seen,  
Have acted, suffered, travelled far, observed  
With no incurious eye ; and books are yours,  
Within whose silent chambers treasure lies  
Preserved from age to age ; more precious far  
Than that accumulated store of gold  
And orient gems, which, for a day of need,  
The Sultan hides deep in ancestral tombs.  
These hoards of truth you can unlock at will :  
And music waits upon your skilful touch,  
Sounds which the wandering shepherd from these heights  
Hears, and forgets his purpose ;—furnished thus,  
How can you droop, if willing to be upraised ?

A piteous lot it were to flee from Man—  
Yet not rejoice in Nature. He, whose hours  
Are by domestic pleasures uncaressed  
And unenlivened ; who exists whole years

Apart from benefits received or done  
'Mid the transactions of the bustling crowd ;  
Who neither hears, nor feels a wish to hear,  
Of the world's interests—such a one hath need  
Of a quick fancy, and an active heart,  
That, for the day's consumption, books may yield  
Food not unwholesome ; earth and air correct  
His morbid humour, with delight supplied.  
—Truth has her pleasure-grounds, her haunts of ease  
And easy contemplation ; gay parterres,  
And labyrinthine walks, her sunny glades  
And shady groves in studied contrast—each,  
For recreation, leading into each :  
These may he range, if willing to partake  
Their soft indulgences, and in due time  
May issue thence, recruited for the tasks  
And course of service Truth requires from those  
Who tend her altars, wait upon her throne,  
And guard her fortresses. Who thinks, and feels,  
And recognises ever and anon  
The breeze of nature stirring in his soul,  
Why need such man go desperately astray,  
And nurse ' the dreadful appetite of death ?'  
If tired with systems, each in its degree  
Substantial, and all crumbling in their turn,  
Let him build systems of his own, and smile  
At the fond work, demolished with a touch ;  
If unreligious, let him be at once  
Among ten thousand innocents, enrolled

A pupil in the many-chambered school,  
Where superstition weaves her airy dreams.

Life's autumn past, I stand on winter's verge ;  
And daily lose what I desire to keep :  
Yet rather would I instantly decline  
To the traditionary sympathies  
Of a most rustic ignorance, and take  
A fearful apprehension from the owl  
Or death-watch : and as readily rejoice,  
If two auspicious magpies crossed my way ;—  
To this would rather bend than see and hear  
The repetitions wearisome of sense,  
Where soul is dead, and feeling hath no place :  
Where knowledge, ill begun in cold remark  
On outward things, with formal inference ends ;  
Or, if the mind turn inward, she recoils  
At once—or, not recoiling, is perplexed—  
Lost in a gloom of uninspired research ;  
Meanwhile, the heart within the heart, the seat  
Where peace and happy consciousness should dwell,  
On its own axis restlessly revolves,  
Yet nowhere finds the cheering light of truth.

Upon the breast of new-created earth  
Man walked ; and when and wheresoe'er he moved,  
Alone or mated, solitude was not.  
He heard, borne on the wind, the articulate voice  
Of God ; and Angels to his sight appeared,

Crowning the glorious hills of paradise ;  
Or through the groves gliding like morning mist  
Enkindled by the sun. He sate—and talked  
With winged Messengers ; who daily brought  
To his small island in the ethereal deep  
Tidings of joy and love.—From those pure heights  
(Whether of actual vision, sensible  
To sight and feeling, or that in this sort  
Have condescendingly been shadowed forth  
Communications spiritually maintained,  
And intuitions moral and divine)  
Fell Human-kind—to banishment condemned  
That flowing years repealed not : and distress  
And grief spread wide ; but Man escaped the doom  
Of destitution ;—solitude was not.  
—Jehovah—shapeless Power above all Powers,  
Single and one, the omnipresent God,  
By vocal utterance, or blaze of light,  
Or cloud of darkness, localized in heaven ;  
On earth, enshrined within the wandering ark ;  
Or, out of Sion, thundering from his throne  
Between the Cherubim—on the chosen Race  
Showered miracles, and ceased not to dispense  
Judgments, that filled the land from age to age  
With hope, and love, and gratitude, and fear ;  
And with amazement smote ;—thereby to assert  
His scorned, or unacknowledged sovereignty.  
And when the One, ineffable of name,  
Of nature indivisible, withdrew

From mortal adoration or regard,  
Not then was Deity engulfed ; nor Man,  
The rational creature, left, to feel the weight  
Of his own reason, without sense or thought  
Of higher reason and a purer will,  
To benefit and bless, through mightier power :—  
Whether the Persian—zealous to reject  
Altar and image, and the inclusive walls  
And roofs of temples built by human hands—  
To loftiest heights ascending, from their tops,  
With myrtle-wreathed tiara on his brow,  
Presented sacrifice to moon and stars,  
And to the winds and mother elements,  
And the whole circle of the heavens, for him  
A sensitive existence, and a God,  
With lifted hands invoked, and songs of praise :  
Or, less reluctantly to bonds of sense  
Yielding his soul, the Babylonian framed  
For influence undefined a personal shape ;  
And, from the plain, with toil immense, upreared  
Tower eight times planted on the top of tower ,  
That Belus, nightly to his splendid couch  
Descending, there might rest ; upon that height  
Pure and serene, diffused—to overlook  
Winding Euphrates, and the city vast  
Of his devoted worshippers, far-stretched,  
With grove, and field, and garden, interspersed :  
Their town, and foodful region for support  
Against the pressure of beleaguering war.

Chaldean Shepherds, ranging trackless fields,  
Beneath the concave of unclouded skies  
Spread like a sea, in boundless solitude,  
Looked on the polar star, as on a guide  
And guardian of their course, that never closed  
His steadfast eye. The planetary Five  
With a submissive reverence they beheld ;  
Watched, from the centre of their sleeping flocks  
Those radiant Mercuries, that seemed to move  
Carrying through ether, in perpetual round,  
Decrees and resolutions of the Gods ;  
And, by their aspects, signifying works  
Of dim futurity, to Man revealed.  
—The imaginative faculty was lord  
Of observations natural ; and, thus  
Led on, those shepherds made report of stars  
In set rotation passing to and fro,  
Between the orbs of our apparent sphere  
And its invisible counterpart, adorned  
With answering constellations, under earth,  
Removed from all approach of living sight  
But present to the dead ; who, so they deemed,  
Like those celestial messengers beheld  
All accidents, and judges were of all.

The lively Grecian, in a land of hills,  
Rivers and fertile plains, and sounding shores,—  
Under a cope of sky more variable,  
Could find commodious place for every God.

Promptly received, as prodigally brought,  
From the surrounding countries, at the choice  
Of all adventurers. With unrivalled skill,  
As nicest observation furnished hints  
For studious fancy, his quick hand bestowed  
On fluent operations a fixed shape ;  
Metal or stone, idolatrously served.  
And yet—triumphant o'er this pompous show  
Of art, this palpable array of sense,  
On every side encountered ; in despite  
Of the gross fictions chanted in the streets  
By wandering Rhapsodists ; and in contempt  
Of doubt and bold denial hourly urged  
Amid the wrangling schools—a SPIRIT hung,  
Beautiful region ! o'er thy towns and farms,  
Statues and temples, and memorial tombs ;  
And emanations were perceived ; and acts  
Of immortality, in Nature's course,  
Exemplified by mysteries, that were felt  
As bonds, on grave philosopher imposed  
And armed warrior ; and in every grove  
A gay or pensive tenderness prevailed,  
When piety more awful had relaxed.  
—' Take, running river, take these locks of mine' —  
Thus would the Votary say—' this severed hair,  
' My vow fulfilling, do I here present,  
' Thankful for my beloved child's return.  
' Thy banks, Cephissus, he again hath trod,  
' Thy murmurs heard ; and drunk the crystal lymph

‘ With which thou dost refresh the thirsty lip,  
‘ And moisten all day long these flowery fields ! ’  
And doubtless, sometimes, when the hair was shed  
Upon the flowing stream, a thought arose  
Of Life continuous, Being unimpaired ;  
That hath been, is, and where it was and is  
There shall endure,—existence unexposed  
To the blind walk of mortal accident ;  
From diminution safe and weakening age ;  
While man grows old, and dwindles, and decays ;  
And countless generations of mankind  
Depart ; and leave no vestige where they trod.

We live by *Admiration, Hope, and Love* ;  
And, even as these are well and wisely fixed,  
In dignity of being we ascend.  
But what is error ? ” — “ Answer he who can ! ”  
The Sceptic somewhat haughtily exclaimed :  
“ Love, Hope, and Admiration—are they not  
Mad Fancy’s favourite vassals ? Does not life  
Use them, full oft, as pioneers to ruin,  
Guides to destruction ? Is it well to trust  
Imagination’s light when reason’s fails,  
The unguarded taper where the guarded faints ?  
—Stoop from those heights, and soberly declare  
What error is ; and, of our errors, which  
Doth most debase the mind ; the genuine seats  
Of power, where are they ? Who shall regulate,  
With truth, the scale of intellectual rank ? ”



“Methinks,” persuasively the Sage replied,  
“That for this arduous office you possess  
Some rare advantages. Your early days  
A grateful recollection must supply  
Of much exalted good by Heaven vouchsafed  
To dignify the humblest state.—Your voice  
Hath, in my hearing, often testified  
That poor men’s children, they, and they alone,  
By their condition taught, can understand  
The wisdom of the prayer that daily asks  
For daily bread. A consciousness is yours  
How feelingly religion may be learned  
In smoky cabins, from a mother’s tongue—  
Heard while the dwelling vibrates to the din  
Of the contiguous torrent, gathering strength  
At every moment—and, with strength, increase  
Of fury ; or, while snow is at the door,  
Assaulting and defending, and the wind,  
A sightless labourer, whistles at his work—  
Fearful ; but resignation tempers fear,  
And piety is sweet to infant minds.  
—The Shepherd-lad, that in the sunshine carves,  
On the green turf, a dial—to divide  
The silent hours ; and who to that report  
Can portion out his pleasures, and adapt,  
Throughout a long and lonely summer’s day,  
His round of pastoral duties, is not left  
With less intelligence for *moral* things  
Of gravest import. Early he perceives,

Within himself, a measure and a rule,  
Which to the sun of truth he can apply,  
That shines for him, and shines for all mankind.  
Experience daily fixing his regards  
On nature's wants, he knows how few they are,  
And where they lie, how answered and appeased.  
This knowledge ample recompence affords  
For manifold privations ; he refers  
His notions to this standard ; on this rock  
Rests his desires ; and hence, in after life,  
Soul-strengthening patience, and sublime content.  
Imagination—not permitted here  
To waste her powers, as in the worldling's mind,  
On fickle pleasures, and superfluous cares,  
And trivial ostentation—is left free  
And puissant to range the solemn walks  
Of time and nature, girded by a zone  
That, while it binds, invigorates and supports.  
Acknowledge, then, that whether by the side  
Of his poor hut, or on the mountain top,  
Or in the cultured field, a Man so bred  
(Take from him what you will upon the score  
Of ignorance or illusion) lives and breathes  
For noble purposes of mind : his heart  
Beats to the heroic song of ancient days ;  
His eye distinguishes, his soul creates.  
And those illusions, which excite the scorn  
Or move the pity of unthinking minds,  
Are they not mainly outward ministers

Of inward conscience? with whose service charged  
They came and go, appeared and disappear,  
Diverting evil purposes, remorse  
Awakening, chastening an intemperate grief,  
Or pride of heart abating: and, whene'er  
For less important ends those phantoms move,  
Who would forbid them, if their presence serve,  
Among wild mountains and unpeopled heaths,  
Filling a space, 'else vacant, to exalt  
The forms of Nature, and enlarge her powers?

'Once more to distant ages of the world  
Let us revert, and place before our thoughts  
The face which rural solitude might wear  
To the unenlightened swains of pagan Greece.  
—In that fair clime, the lonely herdsman, stretched  
On the soft grass through half a summer's day,  
With music lulled his indolent repose:  
And, in some fit of weariness, if he,  
When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear  
A distant strain, far sweeter than the sounds  
Which his poor skill could make, his fancy fetched,  
Even from the blazing chariot of the sun,  
A beardless Youth, who touched a golden lute,  
And filled the illumined groves with ravishment.  
The nightly hunter, lifting a bright eye  
Up towards the crescent moon, with grateful heart  
Called on the lovely wanderer who bestowed  
That timely light, to share his joyous sport:

And hence, a beaming Goddess with her Nymphs,  
Across the lawn and through the darksome grove  
(Not unaccompanied with tuneful notes  
By echo multiplied from rock or cave)  
Swept in the storm of chase ; as moon and stars  
Glance rapidly along the clouded heaven,  
When winds are blowing strong. The traveller slaked  
His thirst from rill or gushing fount, and thanked  
The Naiad. Sunbeams, upon distant hills  
Gliding apace, with shadows in their train,  
Might, with small help from fancy, be transformed  
Into fleet Oreads sporting visibly.  
The Zephyrs fanning, as they passed, their wings,  
Lacked not, for love, fair objects whom they wooed  
With gentle whisper. Withered boughs grotesque,  
Stripped of their leaves and twigs by hoary age,  
From depth of shaggy covert peeping forth  
In the low vale, or on steep mountain side ;  
And, sometimes, intermixed with stirring horns  
Of the live deer, or goat's depending beard,—  
These were the lurking Satyrs, a wild brood  
Of gamesome Deities ; or Pan himself,  
The simple shepherd's awe-inspiring God !”

As this apt strain proceeded, I could mark  
Its kindly influence, o'er the yielding brow  
Of our Companion, gradually diffused ;  
While, listening, he had paced the noiseless turf,  
Like one whose untired ear a murmuring stream

Detains ; but tempted now to interpose,  
He with a smile exclaimed :—

“ ’Tis well you speak  
At a safe distance from our native land,  
And from the mansions where our youth was taught.  
The true descendants of those godly men  
Who swept from Scotland, in a flame of zeal,  
Shrine, altar, image, and the massy piles  
That harboured them,—the souls retaining yet  
The churlish features of that after-race  
Who fled to woods, caverns, and jutting rocks,  
In deadly scorn of superstitious rites,  
Or what their scruples construed to be such—  
How, think you, would they tolerate this scheme  
Of fine propensities, that tends, if urged  
Far as it might be urged, to sow afresh  
The weeds of Romish phantasy, in vain  
Uprooted ; would re-consecrate our wells  
To good Saint Fillan and to fair Saint Anne ;  
And from long banishment recall Saint Giles,  
To watch again with tutelary love  
O’er stately Edinburgh throned on crags ?  
A blessed restoration, to behold  
The patron, on the shoulders of his priests,  
Once more parading through her crowded streets  
Now simply guarded by the sober powers  
Of science, and philosophy, and sense ! ”

This answer followed.—“ You have turned my thoughts

Upon our brave Progenitors, who rose  
Against idolatry with warlike mind,  
And shrunk from vain observances, to lurk  
In woods, and dwell beneath impending rocks  
Ill-sheltered, and oft wanting fire and food ;  
Why ?—for this very reason that they felt,  
And did acknowledge, wheresoe'er they moved,  
A spiritual presence, oft-times misconceived ;  
But still a high dependence, a divine  
Bounty and government, that filled their hearts  
With joy, and gratitude, and fear, and love ;  
And from their fervent lips drew hymns of praise,  
That through the desert rang. Though favoured less,  
Far less, than these, yet such, in their degree,  
Were those bewildered Pagans of old time.  
Beyond their own poor natures and above  
They looked ; were humbly thankful for the good  
Which the warm sun solicited, and earth  
Bestowed ; were gladsome,—and their moral sense  
They fortified with reverence for the Gods ;  
And they had hopes that overstepped the Grave.

Now, shall our great Discoverers," he exclaimed,  
Raising his voice triumphantly, " obtain  
From sense and reason less than these obtained,  
Though far misled ? Shall men for whom our age  
Unbaffled powers of vision hath prepared,  
To explore the world without and world within,  
Be joyless as the blind ? Ambitious spirits—

Whom earth, at this late season, hath produced  
To regulate the moving spheres, and weigh  
The planets in the hollow of their hand ;  
And they who rather dive than soar, whose pains  
Have solved the elements, or analysed  
The thinking principle—shall they in fact  
Prove a degraded Race ? and what avails  
Renown, if their presumption make them such ?  
Oh ! there is laughter at their work in heaven !  
Inquire of ancient Wisdom ; go, demand  
Of mighty Nature, if 'twas ever meant  
That we should pry far off yet be unraised ;  
That we should pore, and dwindle as we pore,  
Viewing all objects unremittingly  
In disconnexion dead and spiritless ;  
And still dividing, and dividing still,  
Break down all grandeur, still unsatisfied  
With the perverse attempt, while littleness  
May yet become more little ; waging thus  
An impious warfare with the very life  
Of our own souls !

And if indeed there be  
An all-pervading Spirit, upon whom  
Our dark foundations rest, could he design  
That this magnificent effect of power,  
The earth we tread, the sky that we behold  
By day, and all the pomp which night reveals ;  
That these—and that superior mystery  
Our vital frame, so fearfully devised,

And the dread soul within it—should exist  
Only to be examined, pondered, searched,  
Probed, vexed, and criticised ?—Accuse me not  
Of arrogance, unknown Wanderer as I am,  
If, having walked with nature threescore years,  
And offered, far as frailty would allow,  
My heart a daily sacrifice to Truth,  
I now affirm of Nature and of Truth,  
Whom I have served, that their DIVINITY  
Revolts, offended at the ways of men  
Swayed by such motives, to such ends employed ;  
Philosophers, who, though the human soul  
Be of a thousand faculties composed,  
And twice ten thousand interests, do yet prize  
This soul, and the transcendent universe,  
No more than as a mirror that reflects  
To proud Self-love her own intelligence ;  
That one, poor, finite object, in the abyss  
Of infinite Being, twinkling restlessly !

Nor higher place can be assigned to him  
And his compeers—the laughing Sage of France.—  
Crowned was he, if my memory do not err,  
With laurel planted upon hoary hairs,  
In sign of conquest by his wit achieved  
And benefits his wisdom had conferred ;  
His tottering body was with wreaths of flowers  
Opprest, far less becoming ornaments  
Than Spring oft twines about a mouldering tree ;



Yet so it pleased a fond, a vain old Man,  
And a most frivolous people. Him I mean  
Who penned, to ridicule confiding faith,  
This sorry Legend; which by chance we found  
Piled in a nook, through malice, as might seem,  
Among more innocent rubbish."—Speaking thus,  
With a brief notice when, and how, and where,  
We had espied the book, he drew it forth;  
And courteously, as if the act removed,  
At once, all traces from the good Man's heart  
Of unbenign aversion or contempt,  
Restored it to its owner. "Gentle Friend,"  
Herewith he grasped the Solitary's hand,  
"You have known better lights and guides than these.  
Ah! let not aught amiss within dispose  
A noble mind to practise on herself,  
And tempt opinion to support the wrongs  
Of passion: whatsoe'er be felt or feared,  
From higher judgment-seats make no appeal  
To lower: can you question that the soul  
Inherits an allegiance, not by choice  
To be cast off, upon an oath proposed  
By each new upstart notion? In the ports  
Of levity no refuge can be found,  
No shelter, for a spirit in distress.  
He, who by wilful disesteem of life  
And proud insensibility to hope,  
Affronts the eye of Solitude, shall learn  
That her mild nature can be terrible;

That neither she nor Silence lack the power  
To avenge their own insulted majesty.

O blest seclusion ! when the mind admits  
The law of duty ; and can therefore move  
Through each vicissitude of loss and gain,  
Linked in entire complacence with her choice ;  
When youth's presumptuousness is mellowed down,  
And manhood's vain anxiety dismissed ;  
When wisdom shows her seasonable fruit,  
Upon the boughs of sheltering leisure hung  
In sober plenty ; when the spirit stoops  
To drink with gratitude the crystal stream  
Of unreprieved enjoyment ; and is pleased  
To muse, and be saluted by the air  
Of meek repentance, wafting wall-flower scents  
From out the crumbling ruins of fallen pride  
And chambers of transgression, now forlorn.  
O, calm contented days, and peaceful nights !  
Who, when such good can be obtained, would strive  
To reconcile his manhood to a couch  
Soft, as may seem, but, under that disguise,  
Stuffed with the thorny substance of the past  
For fixed annoyance ; and full oft beset  
With floating dreams, black and disconsolate,  
The vapoury phantoms of futurity ?

Within the soul a faculty abides,  
That with interpositions, which would hide

And darken, so can deal, that they become  
Contingencies of pomp ; and serve to exalt  
Her native brightness. As the ample moon,  
In the deep stillness of a summer even  
Rising behind a thick and lofty grove,  
Burns, like an unconsuming fire of light,  
In the green trees ; and, kindling on all sides  
Their leafy umbrage, turns the dusky veil  
Into a substance glorious as her own,  
Yea, with her own incorporated, by power  
Capacious and serene ; like power abides  
In man's celestial spirit ; virtue thus  
Sets forth and magnifies herself ; thus feeds  
A calm, a beautiful, and silent fire,  
From the encumbrances of mortal life,  
From error, disappointment—nay, from guilt ;  
And sometimes, so relenting justice wills,  
From palpable oppressions of despair."

The Solitary by these words was touched  
With manifest emotion, and exclaimed ;  
" But how begin ? and whence ?—'The Mind is free—  
Resolve,' the haughty Moralist would say,  
'This single act is all that we demand.'  
Alas ! such wisdom bids a creature fly .  
Whose very sorrow is, that time hath shorn  
His natural wings !—To friendship let him turn  
For succour ; but perhaps he sits alone  
On stormy waters, tossed in a little boat

That holds but him, and can contain no more !  
 Religion tells of amity sublime  
 Which no condition can preclude ; of One  
 Who sees all suffering, comprehends all wants,  
 All weakness fathoms, can supply all needs ;  
 But is that bounty absolute ?—His gifts,  
 Are they not, still, in some degree, rewards  
 For acts of service ? Can his love extend  
 To hearts that own not him ? Will showers of grace,  
 When in the sky no promise may be seen,  
 Fall to refresh a parched and withered land ?  
 Or shall the groaning Spirit cast her load  
 At the Redeemer's feet ?”

In rueful tone,

With some impatience in his mien, he spake :  
 Back to my mind rushed all that had been urged  
 To calm the Sufferer when his story closed ;  
 I looked for counsel as unbending now ;  
 But a discriminating sympathy  
 Stooped to this apt reply :—

“As men from men

Do, in the constitution of their souls,  
 Differ, by mystery not to be explained ;  
 And as we fall by various ways, and sink  
 One deeper than another, self-condemned,  
 Through manifold degrees of guilt and shame ;  
 So manifold and various are the ways  
 Of restoration, fashioned to the steps  
 Of all infirmity, and tending all

To the same point, attainable by all—  
Peace in ourselves, and union with our God.  
For you, assuredly, a hopeful road  
Lies open : we have heard from you a voice  
At every moment softened in its course  
By tenderness of heart ; have seen your eye,  
Even like an altar lit by fire from heaven,  
Kindle before us.—Your discourse this day,  
That, like the fabled Lethe, wished to flow  
In creeping sadness, through oblivious shades  
Of death and night, has caught at every turn  
The colours of the sun. Access for you  
Is yet preserved to principles of truth,  
Which the imaginative Will upholds  
In seats of wisdom, not to be approached  
By the inferior Faculty that moulds,  
With her minute and speculative pains,  
Opinion, ever changing !

I have seen  
A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract  
Of inland ground, applying to his ear  
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell ;  
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul  
Listened intensely ; and his countenance soon  
Brightened with joy ; for murmurings from within  
Were heard, sonorous cadences ! whereby,  
To his belief, the monitor expressed  
Mysterious union with its native sea.  
Even such a shell the universe itself

Is to the ear of Faith ; and there are times,  
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart  
Authentic tidings of invisible things ;  
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power ;  
And central peace, subsisting at the heart  
Of endless agitation. Here you stand,  
Adore, and worship, when you know it not ;  
Pious beyond the intention of your thought ;  
Devout above the meaning of your will.  
—Yes, you have felt, and may not cease to feel.  
The estate of man would be indeed forlorn  
If false conclusions of the reasoning power  
Made the eye blind, and closed the passages  
Through which the ear converses with the heart.  
Has not the soul, the being of your life,  
Received a shock of awful consciousness,  
In some calm season, when these lofty rocks  
At night's approach bring down the unclouded sky,  
To rest upon their circumambient walls ;  
A temple framing of dimensions vast,  
And yet not too enormous for the sound  
Of human anthems,—choral song, or burst  
Sublime of instrumental harmony,  
To glorify the Eternal ! What if these  
Did never break the stillness that prevails  
Here,—if the solemn nightingale be mute,  
And the soft woodlark here did never chant  
Her vespers,—Nature fails not to provide  
Impulse and utterance. The whispering air

Sends inspiration from the shadowy heights,  
And blind recesses of the caverned rocks ;  
The little rills, and waters numberless,  
Inaudible by daylight, blend their notes  
With the loud streams : and often, at the hour  
When issue forth the first pale stars, is heard,  
Within the circuit of this fabric huge,  
One voice—the solitary raven, flying  
Athwart the concave of the dark blue dome,  
Unseen, perchance above all power of sight—  
An iron knell ! with echoes from afar  
Faint—and still fainter—as the cry, with which  
The wanderer accompanies her flight  
Through the calm region, fades upon the ear,  
Diminishing by distance till it seemed  
To expire ; yet from the abyss is caught again,  
And yet again recovered !

But descending  
From these imaginative heights, that yield  
Far-stretching views into eternity,  
Acknowledge that to Nature's humbler power  
Your cherished sullenness is forced to bend  
Even here, where her amenities are sown  
With sparing hand. Then trust yourself abroad  
To range her blooming bowers, and spacious fields,  
Where on the labours of the happy throng  
She smiles, including in her wide embrace  
City, and town, and tower,—and sea with ships  
Sprinkled ;—be our Companion while we track

Her rivers populous with gliding life ;  
While, free as air, o'er printless sands we march,  
Or pierce the gloom of her majestic woods ;  
Roaming, or resting under grateful shade  
In peace and meditative cheerfulness ;  
Where living things, and things inanimate,  
Do speak, at Heaven's command, to eye and ear,  
And speak to social reason's inner sense,  
With inarticulate language.

For the Man,  
Who, in this spirit, communes with the Forms  
Of nature, who with understanding heart  
Both knows and loves such objects as excite  
No morbid passions, no disquietude,  
No vengeance, and no hatred, needs must feel  
The joy of that pure principle of love  
So deeply, that, unsatisfied with aught  
Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose  
But seek for objects of a kindred love  
In fellow-natures and a kindred joy.  
Accordingly he by degrees perceives  
His feelings of aversion softened down ;  
A holy tenderness pervade his frame.  
His sanity of reason not impaired,  
Say rather, all his thoughts now flowing clear,  
From a clear fountain flowing, he looks round  
And seeks for good ; and finds the good he seeks :  
Until abhorrence and contempt are things  
He only knows by name ; and, if he hear,



From other mouths, the language which they speak,  
He is compassionate ; and has no thought,  
No feeling, which can overcome his love.

And further ; by contemplating these Forms  
In the relations which they bear to man,  
He shall discern, how, through the various means  
Which silently they yield, are multiplied  
The spiritual presences of absent things.  
Trust me, that for the instructed, time will come  
When they shall meet no object but may teach  
Some acceptable lesson to their minds  
Of human suffering, or of human joy.  
So shall they learn, while all things speak of man,  
Their duties from all forms ; and general laws,  
And local accidents, shall tend alike  
To rouse, to urge ; and, with the will, confer  
The ability to spread the blessings wide  
Of true philanthropy. The light of love  
Not failing, perseverance from their steps  
Departing not, for them shall be confirmed  
The glorious habit by which sense is made  
Subservient still to moral purposes,  
Auxiliar to divine. That change shall clothe  
The naked spirit, ceasing to deplore  
The burthen of existence. Science then  
Shall be a precious visitant ; and then,  
And only then, be worthy of her name :  
For then her heart shall kindle ; her dull eye,

Dull and inanimate, no more shall hang  
Chained to its object in brute slavery ;  
But taught with patient interest to watch  
The processes of things, and serve the cause  
Of order and distinctness, not for this  
Shall it forget that its most noble use,  
Its most illustrious province, must be found  
In furnishing clear guidance, a support  
Not treacherous, to the mind's *excursive* power.  
—So build we up the Being that we are ;  
Thus deeply drinking-in the soul of things,  
We shall be wise perforce ; and, while inspired  
By choice—and conscious that the Will is free,  
Shall move unswerving, even as if impelled  
By strict necessity, along the path  
Of order and of good. Whate'er we see,  
Whate'er we feel, shall tend to feed and nurse,  
By agency direct or indirect,  
Our faculties ; shall fix in calmer seats,  
Of moral strength, and raise to loftier heights  
Of divine love, our intellectual soul."

Here closed the Sage that eloquent harangue,  
Poured forth with fervour in continuous stream ;  
Such as, remote, mid savage wilderness,  
An Indian Chief discharges from his breast  
Into the hearing of assembled tribes,  
In open circle seated round, and hushed  
As the unbreathing air, when not a leaf

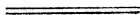
Stirs in the mighty woods.—So did he speak :  
The words he uttered shall not pass away  
Dispersed, like music that the wind takes up  
By snatches, and lets fall, to be forgotten ;  
No—they sank into me, the bounteous gift  
Of one whom time and nature had made wise,  
Gracing his doctrine with authority  
Which hostile spirits silently allow ;  
Of one accustomed to desires that feed  
On fruitage gathered from the tree of life ;  
To hopes on knowledge and experience built ;  
Of one in whom persuasion and belief  
Had ripened into faith, and faith become  
A passionate intuition ; whence the Soul,  
Though bound to earth by ties of pity and love,  
From all injurious servitude was free.

The Sun, before his place of rest were reached,  
Had yet to travel far, but unto us,  
To us who stood low in that hollow dell,  
He had become invisible,—a pomp  
Leaving behind of yellow radiance spread  
Over the mountain sides, in contrast bold  
With ample shadows, seemingly, no less  
Than those resplendent lights, his rich bequest ;  
A dispensation of his evening power.  
—A down the path that from the glen had led  
The funeral train, the Shepherd and his Mate  
Were seen descending :—forth to greet them ran

Our little Page : the rustic pair approach ;  
And in the Matron's aspect may be read  
A plain assurance that the words which told  
How that neglected Pensioner was sent  
Before his time into a quiet grave,  
Had done to her humanity no wrong :  
But we are kindly welcomed—promptly served  
With ostentatious zeal.—Along the floor  
Of the small Cottage in the lonely Dell  
A grateful couch was spread for our repose ;  
Where, in the guise of mountaineers, we slept,  
Stretched upon fragrant heath, and lulled by sound  
Of far-off torrents charming the still night ;  
And to tired limbs and over-busy thoughts  
Inviting sleep and soft forgetfulness.

END OF THE FOURTH BOOK.

THE EXCURSION.



BOOK V.

THE PASTOR.


## ARGUMENT.

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## BOOK FIFTH.

THE PASTOR.

“FAREWELL, deep Valley, with thy one rude House,  
And its small lot of life-supporting fields,  
And guardian rocks!—Farewell, attractive seat !  
To the still influx of the morning light  
Open, and day’s pure cheerfulness, but veiled  
From human observation, as if yet  
Primeval forests wrapped thee round with dark  
Impenetrable shade ; once more farewell,  
Majestic circuit, beautiful abyss,  
By Nature destined from the birth of things  
For quietness profound !”

Of that brown ridge, sole outlet of the vale  
Which foot of boldest stranger would attempt,  
Lingering behind my comrades, thus I breathed  
A parting tribute to a spot that seemed   
Like the fixed centre of a troubled world.

Again I halted with reverted eyes ;  
The chain that would not slacken, was at length  
Snapt,—and, pursuing leisurely my way,  
How vain, thought I, is it by change of place  
To seek that comfort which the mind denies ;  
Yet trial and temptation oft are shunned  
Wisely ; and by such tenure do we hold,  
Frail life's possessions, that even they whose fate  
Yields no peculiar reason of complaint  
Might, by the promise that is here, be won  
To steal from active duties, and embrace  
Obscurity, and calm forgetfulness.  
—Knowledge, methinks, in these disordered times,  
Should be allowed a privilege to have  
Her anchorites, like piety of old ;  
Men, who, from faction sacred, and unstained  
By war, might, if so minded, turn aside  
Uncensured, and subsist, a scattered few  
Living to God and nature, and content  
With that communion. Consecrated be  
The spots where such abide ! But happier still  
The Man, whom, furthermore, a hope attends  
That meditation and research may guide  
His privacy to principles and powers  
Discovered or invented ; or set forth,  
Through his acquaintance with the ways of truth,  
In lucid order ; so that, when his course  
Is run, some faithful eulogist may say,  
He sought not praise, and praise did overlook



His unobtrusive merit ; but his life,  
Sweet to himself, was exercised in good  
That shall survive his name and memory.

Acknowledgments of gratitude sincere  
Accompanied these musings ; fervent thanks  
For my own peaceful lot and happy choice ;  
A choice that from the passions of the world  
Withdrew, and fixed me in a still retreat ;  
Sheltered, but not to social duties lost,  
Secluded, but not buried ; and with song  
Cheering my days, and with industrious thought  
With the ever-welcome company of books ;  
With virtuous friendship's soul-sustaining aid,  
And with the blessings of domestic love.

Thus occupied in mind I paced along,  
Following the rugged road, by sledge or wheel  
Worn in the moorland, till I overtook  
My two Associates, in the morning sunshine  
Halting together on a rocky knoll,  
From which the road descended rapidly  
To the green meadows of another vale.

Here did our pensive Host put forth his hand  
In sign of farewell. "Nay," the old Man said,  
"The fragrant air its coolness still retains ;  
The herds and flocks are yet abroad to crop  
The dewy grass ; you cannot leave us now,

We must not part at this inviting hour.”  
He yielded, though reluctant ; for his mind  
Instinctively disposed him to retire  
To his own covert ; as a billow, heaved  
Upon the beach, rolls back into the sea.  
—So we descend : and winding round a rock  
Attain a point that showed the valley—stretched  
In length before us ; and, not distant far,  
Upon a rising ground a grey church-tower,  
Whose battlements were screened by tufted trees.  
And towards a crystal Mere, that lay beyond  
Among steep hills and woods embosomed, flowed  
A copious stream with boldly-winding course ;  
Here traceable, there hidden—there again  
To sight restored, and glittering in the sun.  
On the stream’s bank, and every where, appeared  
Fair dwellings, single, or in social knots ;  
Some scattered o’er the level, others perched  
On the hill sides, a cheerful quiet scene,  
Now in its morning purity arrayed.

“ As ’mid some happy valley of the Alps,”  
Said I, “ once happy, ere tyrannic power,  
Wantonly breaking in upon the Swiss,  
Destroyed their unoffending commonwealth,  
A popular equality reigns here,  
Save for one house of state beneath whose roof  
A rural lord might dwell.”—“ No feudal pomp,”  
Replied our friend, a chronicler who stood

Where'er he moved, upon familiar ground,  
" Nor feudal power is there ; but there abides,  
In his allotted home, a genuine Priest,  
The shepherd of his flock ; or, as a king  
Is styled, when most affectionately praised,  
The father of his people. Such is he ;  
And rich and poor, and young and old, rejoice  
Under his spiritual sway. He hath vouchsafed  
To me some portion of a kind regard ;  
And something also of his inner mind  
Hath he imparted—but I speak of him  
As he is known to all.

The calm delights

Of unambitious piety he chose,  
And learning's solid dignity , though born  
Of knightly race, nor wanting powerful friends.  
Hither, in prime of manhood, he withdrew  
From academic bowers. He loved the spot—  
Who does not love his native soil ?—he prized  
The ancient rural character, composed  
Of simple manners, feelings unsuppress'd  
And undisguised, and strong and serious thought ;  
A character reflected in himself,  
With such embellishment as well beseems  
His rank and sacred function. This deep vale  
Winds far in reaches hidden from our sight,  
And one a turreted manorial hall  
Adorns, in which the good Man's ancestors  
Have dwelt through ages—Patrons of this Cure.

To them, and to his own judicious pains,  
The Vicar's dwelling, and the whole domain,  
Owes that presiding aspect which might well  
Attract your notice ; statelier than could else  
Have been bestowed, through course of common chance,  
On an unwealthy mountain Benefice."

This said, oft pausing, we pursued our way ;  
Nor reached the village-churchyard till the sun  
Travelling at steadier pace than ours, had risen  
Above the summits of the highest hills,  
And round our path darted oppressive beams.

As chanced, the portals of the sacred Pile  
Stood open ; and we entered. On my frame,  
At such transition from the fervid air,  
A grateful coolness fell, that seemed to strike  
The heart, in concert with that temperate awe  
And natural reverence which the place inspired.  
Not raised in nice proportions was the pile,  
But large and massy ; for duration built ;  
With pillars crowded, and the roof upheld  
By naked rafters intricately crossed,  
Like leafless underboughs, 'mid some thick grove,  
All withered by the depth of shade above.  
Admonitory texts inscribed the walls,  
Each, in its ornamental scroll, enclosed ;  
Each also crowned with winged heads—a pair  
Of rudely-painted Cherubim. The floor

Of nave and aisle, in unpretending guise,  
Was occupied by oaken benches ranged  
In seemly rows ; the chancel only showed  
Some inoffensive marks of earthly state  
And vain distinction. A capacious pew  
Of sculptured oak stood here, with drapery lined ;  
And marble monuments were here displayed  
Thronging the walls ; and on the floor beneath  
Sepulchral stones appeared, with emblems graven  
And foot-worn epitaphs, and some with small  
And shining effigies of brass inlaid.

The tribute by these various records claimed,  
Without reluctance did we pay ; and read  
The ordinary chronicle of birth,  
Office, alliance, and promotion—all  
Ending in dust ; of upright magistrates,  
Grave doctors strenuous for the mother-church,  
And uncorrupted senators, alike  
To king and people true. A brazen plate,  
Not easily deciphered, told of one  
Whose course of earthly honour was begun  
In quality of page among the train  
Of the eighth Henry, when he crossed the seas  
His royal state to show, and prove his strength  
In tournament, upon the fields of France.  
Another tablet registered the death,  
And praised the gallant bearing, of a Knight  
Tried in the sea-fights of the second Charles.

Near this brave Knight his Father lay entomb'd ;  
And, to the silent language giving voice,  
I read,—how in his manhood's earlier day  
He, 'mid the afflictions of intestine war  
And rightful government subverted, found  
One only solace—that he had espoused  
A virtuous Lady tenderly beloved  
For her benign perfections ; and yet more  
Endeared to him, for this, that in her state  
Of wedlock richly crowned with Heaven's regard,  
She with a numerous issue filled his house,  
Who throve, like plants, uninjured by the storm  
That laid their country waste. No need to speak  
Of less particular notices assigned  
To Youth or Maiden gone before their time,  
And Matrons and unwedded Sisters old ;  
Whose charity and goodness were rehearsed  
In modest panegyric.

“ These dim lines,  
What would they tell ? ” said I,—but, from the task  
Of puzzling out that faded narrative,  
With whisper soft my venerable Friend  
Called me ; and, looking down the darksome aisle,  
I saw the Tenant of the lonely vale  
Standing apart ; with curvèd arm reclined  
On the baptismal font ; his pallid face  
Upturned, as if his mind were rapt, or lost  
In some abstraction ;—gracefully he stood,  
The semblance bearing of a sculptured form

That leans upon a monumental urn  
In peace,—from morn to night, from year to year.

Him from that posture did the Sexton rouse ;  
Who entered, humming carelessly a tune,  
Continuation haply of the notes  
That had beguiled the work from which he came,  
With spade and mattock o'er his shoulder hung ;  
To be deposited, for future need,  
In their appointed place. The pale Recluse  
Withdrew ; and straight we followed,—to a spot  
Where sun and shade were intermixed ; for there  
A broad oak, stretching forth its leafy arms  
From an adjoining pasture, overhung  
Small space of that green churchyard with a light  
And pleasant awning. On the moss-grown wall  
My ancient Friend and I together took  
Our seats ; and thus the Solitary spake,  
Standing before us :—

“ Did you note the mien  
Of that self-solaced, easy-hearted churl,  
Death's hireling, who scoops out his neighbour's grave,  
Or wraps an old acquaintance up in clay,  
All unconcerned as he would bind a sheaf,  
Or plant a tree. And did you hear his voice ?  
I was abruptly summoned by the sound  
From some affecting images and thoughts,  
And from the company of serious words,  
Which then were silent ; but crave utterance now.

Much," he continued, with dejected looks,  
" Much, yesterday, was said in glowing phrase  
Of our sublime dependencies, and hopes  
For future states of being ; and the wings  
Of speculation, joyfully outspread,  
Hovered above our destiny on earth ;  
But stoop, and place the prospect of the soul  
In sober contrast with reality,  
And man's substantial life. If this mute earth  
Of what it holds could speak, and every grave  
Were as a volume, shut, yet capable  
Of yielding its contents to eye and ear,  
We should recoil, stricken with sorrow and shame,  
To see disclosed, by such dread proof, how ill  
That which is done accords with what is known  
To reason, and by conscience is enjoined ;  
How idly, how perversely, life's whole course,  
To this conclusion, deviates from the line,  
Or of the end stops short, proposed to all  
At her aspiring outset.

Mark the babe

Not long accustomed to this breathing world ;  
One that hath barely learned to shape a smile ;  
Though yet irrational of soul to grasp  
With tiny finger—to let fall a tear ;  
And, as the heavy cloud of sleep dissolves,  
To stretch his limbs, bemocking, as might seem,  
The outward functions of intelligent man ;  
A grave proficient in amusive feats



Of puppetry, that from the lap declare  
His expectations, and announce his claims  
To that inheritance which millions rue  
That they were ever born to ! In due time  
A day of solemn ceremonial comes ;  
When they, who for this Minor hold in trust  
Rights that transcend the humblest heritage  
Of mere humanity, present their Charge,  
For this occasion daintily adorned,  
At the baptismal font. And when the pure  
And consecrating element hath cleansed  
The original stain, the child is there received  
Into the second ark, Christ's church, with trust  
That he, from wrath redeemed, therein shall float  
Over the billows of this troublesome world  
To the fair land of everlasting life.  
Corrupt affections, covetous desires,  
Are all renounced ; high as the thought of man  
Can carry virtue, virtue is professed ;  
A dedication made, a promise given  
For due provision to control and guide,  
And unremitting progress to ensure  
In holiness and truth."

" You cannot blame,"

Here interposing fervently I said,  
" Rites which attest that Man by nature lies  
Bedded for good and evil in a gulf  
Fearfully low ; nor will your judgment scorn  
Those services, whereby attempt is made

To lift the creature toward that eminence  
On which, now fallen, erewhile in majesty  
He stood ; or if not so, whose top serene  
At least he feels 'tis given him to descry ;  
Not without aspirations, evermore  
Returning, and injunctions from within  
Doubt to cast off and weariness ; in trust  
That what the Soul perceives, if glory lost,  
May be, through pains and persevering hope,  
Recovered ; or, if hitherto unknown,  
Lies within reach, and one day shall be gained."

" I blame them not," he calmly answered—" no ;  
The outward ritual and established forms  
With which communities of men invest  
These inward feelings, and the aspiring vows  
To which the lips give public utterance  
Are both a natural process ; and by me  
Shall pass uncensured ; though the issue prove,  
Bringing from age to age its own reproach,  
Incongruous, impotent, and blank.—But, oh !  
If to be weak is to be wretched—miserable,  
As the lost Angel by a human voice  
Hath mournfully pronounced, then, in my mind,  
Far better not to move at all than move  
By impulse sent from such illusive power,—  
That finds and cannot fasten down ; that grasps  
And is rejoiced, and loses while it grasps ;  
That tempts, emboldens—for a time sustains,

And then betrays ; accuses and inflicts  
Remorseless punishment ; and so retreads  
The inevitable circle : better far  
Than this, to graze the herb in thoughtless peace,  
By foresight or remembrance, undisturbed !

Philosophy ! and thou more vaunted name  
Religion ! with thy statelier retinue,  
Faith, Hope, and Charity—from the visible world  
Choose for your emblems whatsoe'er ye find  
Of safest guidance and of firmest trust—  
The torch, the star, the anchor ; nor except  
The cross itself, at whose unconscious feet  
The generations of mankind have knelt  
Ruefully seized, and shedding bitter tears,  
And through that conflict seeking rest—of you,  
High-titled Powers, am I constrained to ask,  
Here standing, with the unvoyageable sky  
In faint reflection of infinitude  
Stretched overhead, and at my pensive feet  
A subterraneous magazine of bones,  
In whose dark vaults my own shall soon be laid,  
Where are your triumphs ? your dominion where ?  
And in what age admitted and confirmed ?  
—Not for a happy land do I enquire,  
Island or grove, that hides a blessed few  
Who, with obedience willing and sincere,  
To your serene authorities conform ;  
But whom, I ask, of individual Souls,

Have ye withdrawn from passion's crooked ways,  
Inspired, and thoroughly fortified ?—If the heart  
Could be inspected to its inmost folds  
By sight undazzled with the glare of praise,  
Who shall be named—in the resplendent line  
Of sages, martyrs, confessors—the man  
Whom the best might of conscience, truth, and hope,  
For one day's little compass, has preserved  
From painful and discreditable shocks  
Of contradiction, from some vague desire  
Culpably cherished, or corrupt relapse  
To some unsanctioned fear ? ”

“ If this be so,  
And Man,” said I, “ be in his noblest shape  
Thus pitiously infirm ; then, he who made,  
And who shall judge the creature, will forgive.  
—Yet, in its general tenor, your complaint  
Is all too true ; and surely not misplaced :  
For, from this pregnant spot of ground, such thoughts  
Rise to the notice of a serious mind  
By natural exhalation. With the dead  
In their repose, the living in their mirth,  
Who can reflect, unmoved, upon the round  
Of smooth and solemnized complacencies,  
By which, on Christian lands, from age to age  
Profession mocks performance. Earth is sick,  
And Heaven is weary, of the hollow words  
Which States and Kingdoms utter when they talk  
Of truth and justice. Turn to private life

And social neighbourhood ; look we to ourselves ;  
A light of duty shines on every day  
For all ; and yet how few are warmed or cheered !  
How few who mingle with their fellow-men  
And still remain self-governed, and apart,  
Like this our honoured Friend ; and thence acquire  
Right to expect his vigorous decline,  
That promises to the end a blest old age ! ”

“ Yet,” with a smile of triumph thus exclaimed  
The Solitary, “ in the life of man,  
If to the poetry of common speech  
Faith may be given, we see as in a glass  
A true reflection of the circling year,  
With all its seasons. Grant that Spring is there,  
In spite of many a rough untoward blast,  
Hopeful and promising with buds and flowers ;  
Yet where is glowing Summer’s long rich day,  
That *ought* to follow faithfully expressed ?  
And mellow Autumn, charged with bounteous fruit,  
Where is she imaged ? in what favoured clime  
Her lavish pomp, and ripe magnificence ?  
—Yet, while the better part is missed, the worse  
In man’s autumnal season is set forth  
With a resemblance not to be denied,  
And that contents him ; bowers that hear no more  
The voice of gladness, less and less supply  
Of outward sunshine and internal warmth ;

And, with this change, sharp air and falling leaves,  
Foretelling total winter, blank and cold.

How gay the habitations that bedeck  
This fertile valley ! Not a house but seems  
To give assurance of content within ;  
Embosomed happiness, and placid love ;  
As if the sunshine of the day were met  
With answering brightness in the hearts of all  
Who walk this favoured ground. But chance-regards,  
And notice forced upon incurious ears ;  
These, if these only, acting in despite  
Of the encomiums by my Friend pronounced  
On humble life, forbid the judging mind  
To trust the smiling aspect of this fair  
And noiseless commonwealth. The simple race  
Of mountaineers (by nature's self removed  
From foul temptations, and by constant care  
Of a good shepherd tended as themselves  
Do tend their flocks) partake man's general lot  
With little mitigation. They escape,  
Perchance, the heavier woes of guilt ; feel not  
The tedium of fantastic idleness :  
Yet life, as with the multitude, with them  
Is fashioned like an ill-constructed tale ;  
That on the outset wastes its gay desires,  
Its fair adventures, its enlivening hopes,  
And pleasant interests—for the sequel leaving  
Old things repeated with diminished grace ;

And all the laboured novelties at best  
Imperfect substitutes, whose use and power  
Evince the want and weakness whence they spring."

While in this serious mood we held discourse,  
The reverend Pastor toward the church-yard gate  
Approached ; and, with a mild respectful air  
Of native cordiality, our Friend  
Advanced to greet him. With a gracious mien  
Was he received, and mutual joy prevailed.  
Awhile they stood in conference, and I guess  
That he, who now upon the mossy wall  
Sate by my side, had vanished, if a wish  
Could have transferred him to the flying clouds,  
Or the least penetrable hiding-place  
In his own valley's rocky guardianship.  
—For me, I looked upon the pair, well pleased :  
Nature had framed them both, and both were marked  
By circumstance, with intermixture fine  
Of contrast and resemblance. To an oak  
Hardy and grand, a weather-beaten oak,  
Fresh in the strength and majesty of age,  
One might be likened : flourishing appeared,  
Though somewhat past the fulness of his prime,  
The other—like a stately sycamore,  
That spreads, in gentle pomp, its honeyed shade.

A general greeting was exchanged ; and soon  
The Pastor learned that his approach had given

A welcome interruption to discourse  
Grave, and in truth too often sad.—“Is Man  
A child of hope? Do generations press  
On generations, without progress made?  
Halts the individual, ere his hairs be grey,  
Perforce? Are we a creature in whom good  
Preponderates, or evil? Doth the will  
Acknowledge reason’s law? A living power  
Is virtue, or no better than a name,  
Fleeting as health or beauty, and unsound?  
So that the only substance which remains,  
(For thus the tenor of complaint hath run)  
Among so many shadows, are the pains  
And penalties of miserable life,  
Doomed to decay, and then expire in dust!  
—Our cogitations this way have been drawn,  
These are the points,” the Wanderer said, “on which  
Our inquest turns.—Accord, good Sir! the light  
Of your experience to dispel this gloom;  
By your persuasive wisdom shall the heart  
That frets, or languishes, be stilled and cheered.”

“Our nature,” said the Priest, in mild reply,  
“Angels may weigh and fathom: they perceive,  
With undistempered and unclouded spirit,  
The object as it is; but, for ourselves,  
That speculative height *we* may not reach.  
The good and evil are our own; and we  
Are that which we would contemplate from far.



Knowledge, for us, is difficult to gain—  
Is difficult to gain, and hard to keep—  
As virtue's self; like virtue is beset  
With snares; tried, tempted, subject to decay.  
Love, admiration, fear, desire, and hate,  
Blind were we without these: through these alone  
Are capable to notice or discern  
Or to record; we judge, but cannot be  
Indifferent judges. 'Spite of proudest boast,  
Reason, best reason, is to imperfect man  
An effort only, and a noble aim;  
A crown, an attribute of sovereign power,  
Still to be courted—never to be won!  
—Look forth, or each man dive into himself;  
What sees he but a creature too perturbed;  
That is transported to excess; that yearns,  
Regrets, or trembles, wrongly, or too much;  
Hopes rashly, in disgust as rash recoils;  
Battens on spleen, or moulders in despair?  
Thus comprehension fails, and truth is missed;  
Thus darkness and delusion round our path  
Spread, from disease, whose subtle injury lurks  
Within the very faculty of sight.

Yet for the general purposes of faith  
In Providence, for solace and support,  
We may not doubt that who can best subject  
The will to reason's law, can strictliest live  
And act in that obedience, he shall gain

The clearest apprehension of those truths,  
Which unassisted reason's utmost power  
Is too infirm to reach. But, waiving this,  
And our regards confining within bounds  
Of less exalted consciousness, through which  
The very multitude are free to range,  
We safely may affirm that human life  
Is either fair and tempting, a soft scene  
Grateful to sight, refreshing to the soul,  
Or a forbidding tract of cheerless view ;  
Even as the same is looked at, or approached.  
Thus, when in changeful April fields are white  
With new-fallen snow, if from the sullen north  
Your walk conduct you hither, ere the sun  
Hath gained his noontide height, this churchyard, filled  
With mounds transversely lying side by side  
From east to west, before you will appear  
An unillumined, blank, and dreary plain,  
With more than wintry cheerlessness and gloom  
Saddening the heart. Go forward, and look back ;  
Look, from the quarter whence the lord of light,  
Of life, of love, and gladness doth suspense  
His beams ; which, unexcluded in their fall,  
Upon the southern side of every grave  
Have gently exercised a melting power ;  
*Then* will a vernal prospect greet your eye,  
All fresh and beautiful, and green and bright,  
Hopeful and cheerful :—vanished is the pall  
That overspread and chilled the sacred turf,

Vanished or hidden ; and the whole domain,  
To some, too lightly minded, might appear  
A meadow carpet for the dancing hours.  
—This contrast, not unsuitable to life,  
Is to that other state more apposite,  
Death and its two-fold aspect ! wintry—one,  
Cold, sullen, blank, from hope and joy shut out ;  
The other, which the ray divine hath touched,  
Replete with vivid promise, bright as spring.”

“ We see, then, as we feel,” the Wanderer thus  
With a complacent animation spake,  
“ And in your judgment, Sir ! the mind’s repose  
On evidence is not to be ensured  
By act of naked reason. Moral truth  
Is no mechanic structure, built by rule ;  
And which, once built, retains a steadfast shape  
And undisturbed proportions ; but a thing  
Subject, you deem, to vital accidents ;  
And, like the water-lily, lives and thrives,  
Whose root is fixed in stable earth, whose head  
Floats on the tossing waves. With joy sincere  
I re-salute these sentiments confirmed  
By your authority. But how acquire  
The inward principle that gives effect  
To outward argument ; the passive will  
Meek to admit ; the active energy,  
Strong and unbounded to embrace, and firm  
To keep and cherish ? How shall man unite

With self-forgetting tenderness of heart  
An earth-despising dignity of soul ?  
Wise in that union, and without it blind !”

“The way,” said I, “to court, if not obtain  
The ingenuous mind, apt to be set aright ;  
This, in the lonely dell discoursing, you  
Declared at large ; and by what exercise  
From visible nature, or the inner self  
Power may be trained, and renovation brought  
To those who need the gift. But, after all,  
Is aught so certain as that man is doomed  
To breathe beneath a vault of ignorance ?  
The natural roof of that dark house in which  
His soul is pent ! How little can be known—  
This is the wise man’s sigh ; how far we err—  
This is the good man’s not unfrequent pang !  
And they perhaps err least, the lowly class  
Whom a benign necessity compels  
To follow reason’s least ambitious course ;  
Such do I mean who, unperplexed by doubt,  
And uncited by a wish to look  
Into high objects farther than they may,  
Pace to and fro, from morn till even-tide,  
The narrow avenue of daily toil  
For daily bread.”

“Yes,” buoyantly exclaimed  
The pale Recluse—“praise to the sturdy plough,  
And patient spade ; praise to the simple crook,

And ponderous loom—resounding while it holds  
Body and mind in one captivity ;  
And let the light mechanic tool be hailed  
With honour ; which, encasing by the power  
Of long companionship, the artist's hand,  
Cuts off that hand, with all its world of nerves,  
From a too busy commerce with the heart !  
—Inglorious implements of craft and toil,  
Both ye that shape and build, and ye that force,  
By slow solicitation, earth to yield  
Her annual bounty, sparingly dealt forth  
With wise reluctance ; you would I extol,  
Not for gross good alone which ye produce,  
But for the impertinent and ceaseless strife  
Of proofs and reasons ye preclude—in those  
Who to your dull society are born,  
And with their humble birthright rest content.  
—Would I had ne'er renounced it !”

A slight flush

Of moral anger previously had tinged  
The old Man's cheek ; but, at this closing turn  
Of self-reproach, it passed away. Said he,  
“ That which we feel we utter ; as we think  
So have we argued ; reaping for our pains  
No visible recompense. For our relief  
You,” to the Pastor turning thus he spake,  
“ Have kindly interposed. May I entreat  
Your further help ? The mine of real life  
Dig for us ; and present us, in the shape

Of virgin ore, that gold which we, by pains  
Fruitless as those of æry alchemists,  
Seek from the torturing crucible. There lies  
Around us a domain where you have long  
Watched both the outward course and inner heart :  
Give us, for our abstractions, solid facts ;  
For our disputes, plain pictures. Say what man  
He is who cultivates yon hanging field ;  
What qualities of mind she bears, who comes,  
For morn and evening service, with her pail,  
To that green pasture ; place before our sight  
The family who dwell within yon house  
Fenced round with glittering laurel ; or in that  
Below, from which the curling smoke ascends.  
Or rather, as we stand on holy earth,  
And have the dead around us, take from them  
Your instances ; for they are both best known,  
And by frail man most equitably judged.  
Epitomise the life ; pronounce, you can,  
Authentic epitaphs on some of these  
Who, from their lowly mansions hither brought,  
Beneath this turf lie mouldering at our feet :  
So, by your records, may our doubts be solved ;  
And so, not searching higher, we may learn  
*To prize the breath we share with human kind ;  
And look upon the dust of man with awe.*

The Priest replied—"An office you impose  
For which peculiar requisites are mine ;

Yet much, I feel, is wanting—else the task  
Would be most grateful. True indeed it is  
That they whom death has hidden from our sight  
Are worthiest of the mind's regard ; with these  
The future cannot contradict the past :  
Mortality's last exercise and proof  
Is undergone ; the transit made that shows  
The very Soul, revealed as she departs.  
Yet, on your first suggestion, will I give,  
Ere we descend into these silent vaults,  
One picture from the living.

You behold,

High on the breast of yon dark mountain, dark  
With stony barrenness, a shining speck  
Bright as a sunbeam sleeping till a shower  
Brush it away, or cloud pass over it ;  
And such it might be deemed—a sleeping sunbeam ;  
But 'tis a plot of cultivated ground,  
Cut off, an island in the dusky waste ;  
And that attractive brightness is its own.  
The lofty site, by nature framed to tempt  
Amid a wilderness of rocks and stones  
The tiller's hand, a hermit might have chosen,  
For opportunity presented, thence  
Far forth to send his wandering eye o'er land  
And ocean, and look down upon the works,  
The habitations, and the ways of men,  
Himself unseen ! But no tradition tells  
That ever hermit dipped his maple dish

In the sweet spring that lurks 'mid yon green fields ;  
And no such visionary views belong  
To those who occupy and till the ground,  
And on the bosom of the mountain dwell,  
A wedded pair in childless solitude.  
A house of stones collected on the spot,  
By rude hands built, with rocky knolls in front,  
Backed also by a ledge of rock, whose crest  
Of birch-trees waves over the chimney top ;  
A rough abode—in colour, shape, and size,  
Such as in unsafe times of border-war  
Might have been wished for and contrived, to elude  
The eye of roving plunderer—for their need  
Suffices ; and unshaken bears the assault  
Of their most dreaded foe, the strong South-west  
In anger blowing from the distant sea.  
—Alone within her solitary hut ;  
There, or within the compass of her fields,  
At any moment may the Dame be found,  
True as the stock-dove to her shallow nest  
And to the grove that holds it. She beguiles  
By intermingled work of house and field  
The summer's day, and winter's ; with success  
Not equal, but sufficient to maintain,  
Even at the worst, a smooth stream of content,  
Until the expected hour at which her Mate  
From the far-distant quarry's vault returns ;  
And by his converse crowns a silent day  
With evening cheerfulness. In powers of mind,



In scale of culture, few among my flock  
Hold lower rank than this sequestered pair :  
But humbleness of heart descends from heaven ;  
And that best gift of heaven hath fallen on them ;  
Abundant recompense for every want.  
—Stoop from your height, ye proud, and copy these !  
Who, in their noiseless dwelling-place, can hear  
The voice of wisdom whispering scripture texts  
For the mind's government, or temper's peace ;  
And recommending for their mutual need,  
Forgiveness, patience, hope, and charity !”

“ Much was I pleased,” the grey-haired Wanderer said,  
“ When to those shining fields our notice first  
You turned ; and yet more pleased have from your lips  
Gathered this fair report of them who dwell  
In that retirement ; whither, by such course  
Of evil hap and good as oft awaits  
A tired way-faring man, once *I* was brought -  
While traversing alone yon mountain pass.  
Dark on my road the autumnal evening fell,  
And night succeeded with unusual gloom ;  
So that my feet and hands at length became  
Guides better than mine eyes—until a light  
High in the gloom appeared, too high, methought,  
For human habitation ; but I longed  
To reach it, destitute of other hope.  
I looked with steadiness as sailors look  
On the north star, or watch-tower's distant lamp,

And saw the light—now fixed—and shifting now—  
Not like a dancing meteor, but in line  
Of never-varying motion, to and fro.  
It is no night-fire of the naked hills,  
Thought I—some friendly covert must be near.  
With this persuasion thitherward my steps  
I turn, and reach at last the guiding light ;  
Joy to myself ! but to the heart of her  
Who there was standing on the open hill,  
(The same kind Matron whom your tongue hath praised)  
Alarm and disappointment ! The alarm  
Ceased, when she learned through what mishap I came,  
And by what help had gained those distant fields.  
Drawn from her cottage, on that æry height,  
Bearing a lantern in her hand she stood,  
Or paced the ground—to guide her Husband home,  
By that unwearied signal, kenned afar ;  
An anxious duty ! which the lofty site,  
Traversed but by a few irregular paths,  
Imposes, whensoever untoward chance  
Detains him after his accustomed hour  
Till night lies black upon the ground. ‘ But come,  
Come,’ said the Matron, ‘ to our poor abode ;  
Those dark rocks hide it !’ Entering, I beheld  
A blazing fire—beside a cleanly hearth  
Sate down ; and to her office, with leave asked,  
The Dame returned.

Or ere that glowing pile  
Of mountain turf required the builder’s hand

Its wasted splendour to repair, the door  
Opened, and she re-entered with glad looks,  
Her Helpmate following. Hospitable fare,  
Frank conversation, made the evening's treat :  
Need a bewildered traveller wish for more ?  
But more was given ; I studied as we sate  
By the bright fire, the good Man's face—composed  
Of features elegant ; an open brow  
Of undisturbed humanity ; a cheek  
Suffused with something of a feminine hue ;  
Eyes beaming courtesy and mild regard ;  
But, in the quicker turns of the discourse,  
Expression slowly varying, that evinced  
A tardy apprehension. From a fount  
Lost, thought I, in the obscurities of time,  
But honoured once, those features and that mien  
May have descended, though I see them here.  
In such a man, so gentle and subdued,  
Withal so graceful in his gentleness,  
A race illustrious for heroic deeds,  
Humbled, but not degraded, may expire.  
This pleasing fancy (cherished and upheld  
By sundry recollections of such fall  
From high to low, ascent from low to high,  
As books record, and even the careless mind  
Cannot but notice among men and things)  
Went with me to the place of my repose.

Roused by the crowing cock at dawn of day,

I yet had risen too late to interchange  
A morning salutation with my Host,  
Gone forth already to the far-off seat  
Of his day's work. 'Three dark mid-winter months  
'Pass,' said the Matron, 'and I never see,  
'Save when the sabbath brings its kind release,  
'My Helpmate's face by light of day. He quits  
'His door in darkness, nor till dusk returns.  
'And, through Heaven's blessing, thus we gain the bread  
'For which we pray ; and for the wants provide  
'Of sickness, accident, and helpless age.  
'Companions have I many ; many friends,  
'Dependants, comforters—my wheel, my fire,  
'All day the house-clock ticking in mine ear,  
'The cackling hen, the tender chicken brood,  
'And the wild birds that gather round my porch.  
'This honest sheep-dog's countenance I read ;  
'With him can talk ; nor blush to waste a word  
'On creatures less intelligent and shrewd.  
'And if the blustering wind that drives the clouds  
'Care not for me, he lingers round my door,  
'And makes me pastime when our tempers suit ;—  
'But, above all, my thoughts are my support.'  
The Matron ended—nor could I forbear  
To exclaim—'O happy ! yielding to the law  
Of these privations, richer in the main !—  
While thankless thousands are oppress and clogged  
By ease and leisure ; by the very wealth  
And pride of opportunity made poor ;

While tens of thousands falter in their path,  
And sink, through utter want of cheering light ;  
For you the hours of labour do not flag ;  
For you each evening hath its shining star,  
And every sabbath-day its golden sun.' ”

“ Yes ! ” said the Solitary with a smile  
That seemed to break from an expanding heart,  
“ The untutored bird may found, and so construct,  
And with such soft materials line, her nest  
Fixed in the centre of a prickly brake,  
That the thorns wound her not ; they only guard.  
Powers not unjustly likened to those gifts  
Of happy instinct which the woodland bird  
Shares with her species, nature’s grace sometimes  
Upon the individual doth confer,  
Among her higher creatures born and trained  
To use of reason. And, I own, that tired  
Of the ostentatious world—a swelling stage  
With empty actions and vain passions stuffed,  
And from the private struggles of mankind  
Hoping far less than I could wish to hope,  
Far less than once I trusted and believed—  
I love to hear of those, who, not contending  
Nor summoned to contend for virtue’s prize,  
Miss not the humbler good at which they aim  
Blest with a kindly faculty to blunt  
The edge of adverse circumstance, and turn  
Into their contraries the petty plagues

And hinderances with which they stand beset.  
In early youth, among my native hills,  
I knew a Scottish Peasant who possessed  
A few small crofts of stone-encumbered ground ;  
Masses of every shape and size, that lay  
Scattered about under the mouldering walls  
Of a rough precipice ; and some, apart,  
In quarters unobnoxious to such chance,  
As if the moon had showered them down in spite.  
But he repined not. Though the plough was scared  
By these obstructions, 'round the shady stones  
A fertilising moisture,' said the Swain,  
'Gathers, and is preserved ; and feeding dews  
'And damps, through all the droughty summer day  
'From out their substance issuing, maintain  
'Herbage that never fails : no grass springs up  
'So green, so fresh, so plentiful, as mine !'  
But thinly sown these natures ; rare, at least,  
The mutual aptitude of seed and soil  
That yields such kindly product. He, whose bed  
Perhaps yon loose sods cover, the poor Pensioner  
Brought yesterday from our sequestered dell  
Here to lie down in lasting quiet, he,  
If living now, could otherwise report  
Of rustic loneliness : that grey-haired Orphan—  
So call him, for humanity to him  
No parent was—feelingly could have told,  
In life, in death, what solitude can breed  
Of selfishness, and cruelty, and vice ;

Or, if it breed not, hath not power to cure.  
—But your compliance, Sir! with our request  
My words too long have hindered.”

Undeterred,  
Perhaps incited rather, by these shocks,  
In no ungracious opposition, given  
To the confiding spirit of his own  
Experienced faith, the reverend Pastor said,  
Around him looking; “Where shall I begin?  
Who shall be first selected from my flock  
Gathered together in their peaceful fold?”  
He paused—and having lifted up his eyes  
To the pure heaven, he cast them down again  
Upon the earth beneath his feet; and spake:—

“To a mysteriously-consorted pair  
This place is consecrate; to Death and Life,  
And to the best affections that proceed  
From their conjunction;—consecrate to faith  
In him who bled for man upon the cross;  
Hallowed to revelation; and no less  
To reason’s mandates; and the hopes divine  
Of pure imagination;—above all,  
To charity, and love, that have provided,  
Within these precincts, a capacious bed  
And receptacle, open to the good  
And evil, to the just and the unjust;  
In which they find an equal resting-place:  
Even as the multitude of kindred brooks

And streams, whose murmur fills this hollow vale,  
Whether their course be turbulent or smooth,  
Their waters clear or sullied, all are lost  
Within the bosom of yon crystal Lake,  
And end their journey in the same repose !

And blest are they who sleep ; and we that know,  
While in a spot like this we breathe and walk,  
That all beneath us by the wings are covered  
Of motherly humanity, outspread  
And gathering all within their tender shade,  
Though loth and slow to come ! A battle-field,  
In stillness left when slaughter is no more,  
With this compared, yields a strange spectacle !  
A dismal prospect yields the wild shore strewn  
With wrecks, and trod by feet of young and old  
Wandering about in miserable search  
Of friends or kindred, whom the angry sea  
Restores not to their prayer ! Ah ! who would think  
That all the scattered subjects which compose  
Earth's melancholy vision through the space  
Of all her climes—these wretched, these depraved,  
To virtue lost, insensible of peace,  
From the delights of charity cut off,  
To pity dead, the oppressor and the oppressed ;  
Tyrants who utter the destroying word,  
And slaves who will consent to be destroyed—  
Were of one species with the sheltered few,  
Who, with a dutiful and tender hand,



Lodged in a dear appropriated spot,  
This file of infants ; some that never breathed  
The vital air ; others, which, though allowed  
That privilege, did yet expire too soon,  
Or with too brief a warning, to admit  
Administration of the holy rite  
That lovingly consigns the babe to the arms  
Of Jesus, and his everlasting care.  
These that in trembling hope are laid apart ;  
And the besprinkled nursling, unrequired  
Till he begins to smile upon the breast  
That feeds him ; and the tottering little one  
Taken from air and sunshine when the rose  
Of infancy first blooms upon his cheek ;  
The thinking, thoughtless school-boy ; the bold youth  
Of soul impetuous, and the bashful maid  
Smitten while all the promises of life  
Are opening round her ; those of middle age,  
Cast down while confident in strength they stand,  
Like pillars fixed more firmly, as might seem,  
And more secure, by very weight of all  
That, for support, rests on them ; the decayed  
And burthensome ; and lastly, that poor few  
Whose light of reason is with age extinct ;  
The hopeful and the hopeless, first and last,  
The earliest summoned and the longest spared—  
Are here deposited, with tribute paid  
Various, but unto each some tribute paid ;  
As if, amid these peaceful hills and groves,

Society were touched with kind concern,  
And gentle 'Nature grieved, that one should die ;'  
Or, if the change demanded no regret,  
Observed the liberating stroke—and blessed.

And whence that tribute? wherefore these regards?  
Not from the naked *Heart* alone of Man  
(Though claiming high distinction upon earth  
As the sole spring and fountain-head of tears,  
His own peculiar utterance for distress  
Or gladness)—No," the philosophic Priest  
Continued, "'tis not in the vital seat  
Of feeling to produce them, without aid  
From the pure soul, the soul sublime and pure ;  
With her two faculties of eye and ear,  
The one by which a creature, whom his sins  
Have rendered prone, can upward look to heaven ;  
The other that empowers him to perceive  
The voice of Deity, on height and plain,  
Whispering those truths in stillness, which the Word,  
To the four quarters of the winds, proclaims.  
Not without such assistance could the use  
Of these benign observances prevail:  
Thus are they born, thus fostered, thus maintained ;  
And by the care prospective of our wise  
Forefathers, who, to guard against the shocks  
The fluctuation and decay of things,  
Embodied and established these high truths  
In solemn institutions :—men convinced

That life is love and immortality,  
The being one, and one the element.  
There lies the channel, and original bed,  
From the beginning, hollowed out and scooped  
For Man's affections—else betrayed and lost,  
And swallowed up 'mid deserts infinite !  
This is the genuine course, the aim, and end  
Of prescient reason ; all conclusions else  
Are abject, vain, presumptuous, and perverse.  
The faith partaking of those holy times,  
Life, I repeat, is energy of love  
Divine or human ; exercised in pain,  
In strife, and tribulation ; and ordained,  
If so approved and sanctified, to pass,  
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy."

END OF THE FIFTH BOOK.



# THE EXCURSION.



## BOOK VI.

THE CHURCH-YARD AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

## ARGUMENT.

PAGE 205, Poet's Address to the State and Church of England—207, The Pastor not inferior to the ancient Worthies of the Church—208, He begins his Narratives with an instance of unrequited Love—210, Anguish of mind subdued—and how—213, The lonely Miner—214, An instance of perseverance—215, Which leads by contrast to an example of abused talents, irresolution, and weakness—219, Solitary, applying this covertly to his own case, asks for an instance of some Stranger, whose dispositions may have led him to end his days here—220, Pastor, in answer, gives an account of the harmonising influence of Solitude upon two men of opposite principles, who had encountered agitations in public life—223, The rule by which Peace may be obtained expressed, and where—224, Solitary hints at an overpowering Fatality—225, Answer of the Pastor—226, What subjects he will exclude from his Narratives—227, Conversation upon this—229, Instance of an unamiable character, a Female, and why given—233, Contrasted with this, a meek sufferer, from unguarded and betrayed love—244, Instance of heavier guilt, and its consequences to the Offender—245, With this instance of a Marriage Contract broken is contrasted one of a Widower, evidencing his faithful affection towards his deceased wife by his care of their female Children.

## BOOK SIXTH.

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### THE CHURCH-YARD AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

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HAIL to the crown by Freedom shaped—to gird  
An English Sovereign's brow ! and to the throne  
Whereon he sits ! Whose deep foundations lie  
In veneration and the people's love ;  
Whose steps are equity, whose seat is law.  
—Hail to the State of England ! And conjoin  
With this a salutation as devout,  
Made to the spiritual fabric of her Church ;  
Founded in truth ; by blood of Martyrdom  
Cemented ; by the hands of Wisdom reared  
In beauty of holiness, with ordered pomp,  
Decent, and unreprieved. The voice, that greets  
The majesty of both, shall pray for both ;  
That, mutually protected and sustained,  
They may endure long as the sea surrounds  
This favoured Land, or sunshine warms her soil.

And O, ye swelling hills, and spacious plains !  
Besprent from shore to shore with steeple-towers,  
And spires whose ' silent finger points to heaven ;  
Nor wanting, at wide intervals, the bulk  
Of ancient minster, lifted above the cloud  
Of the dense air, which town or city breeds  
To intercept the sun's glad beams—may ne'er  
That true succession fail of English hearts,  
Who, with ancestral feeling, can perceive  
What in those holy structures ye possess  
Of ornamental interest, and the charm  
Of pious sentiment diffused afar,  
And human charity, and social love.  
—Thus never shall the indignities of time  
Approach their reverend graces, unopposed ;  
Nor shall the elements be free to hurt  
Their fair proportions ; nor the blinder rage  
Of bigot zeal madly to overturn ;  
And, if the desolating hand of war  
Spare them, they shall continue to bestow,  
Upon the thronged abodes of busy men  
(Depraved, and ever prone to fill the mind  
Exclusively with transitory things)  
An air and mien of dignified pursuit ;  
Of sweet civility, on rustic wilds.

The Poet, fostering for his native land  
Such hope, entreats that servants may abound  
Of those pure altars worthy ; ministers



Detached from pleasure, to the love of gain  
Superior, insusceptible of pride,  
And by ambitious longings undisturbed ;  
Men, whose delight is where their duty leads  
Or fixes them ; whose least distinguished day  
Shines with some portion of that heavenly lustre  
Which makes the sabbath lovely in the sight  
Of blessed angels, pitying human cares.  
—And, as on earth it is the doom of truth  
To be perpetually attacked by foes  
Open or covert, be that priesthood still,  
For her defence, replenished with a band  
Of strenuous champions, in scholastic arts  
Thoroughly disciplined ; nor (if in course  
Of the revolving world's disturbances  
Cause should recur, which righteous Heaven avert !  
To meet such trial) from their spiritual sires  
Degenerate ; who, constrained to wield the sword  
Of disputation, shrunk not, though assailed  
With hostile din, and combating in sight  
Of angry umpires, partial and unjust ;  
And did, thereafter, bathe their hands in fire,  
So to declare the conscience satisfied :  
Nor for their bodies would accept release ;  
But, blessing God and praising him, bequeathed  
With their last breath, from out the smouldering flame,  
The faith which they by diligence had earned,  
Or, through illuminating grace, received,

For their dear countrymen, and all mankind.  
O high example, constancy divine !

Even such a Man (inheriting the zeal  
And from the sanctity of elder times  
Not deviating,—a priest, the like of whom,  
If multiplied, and in their stations set,  
Would o'er the bosom of a joyful land  
Spread true religion and her genuine fruits)  
Before me stood that day ; on holy ground  
Fraught with the relics of mortality,  
Exalting tender themes, by just degrees  
To lofty raised ; and to the highest, last ;  
The head and mighty paramount of truths,—  
Immortal life, in never-fading worlds,  
For mortal creatures, conquered and secured.

That basis laid, those principles of faith  
Announced, as a preparatory act  
Of reverence to the spirit of the place,  
The Pastor cast his eyes upon the ground ;  
Not, as before, like one oppressed with awe,  
But with a mild and social cheerfulness ;  
Then to the Solitary turned, and spake.

“ At morn or eve, in your retired domain,  
Perchance you not unfrequently have marked  
A Visitor—in quest of herbs and flowers ;

Too delicate employ, as would appear,  
For one, who, though of drooping mien, had yet  
From nature's kindness received a frame  
Robust as ever rural labour bred."

The Solitary answered : " Such a Form  
Full well I recollect. We often crossed  
Each other's path ; but, as the Intruder seemed  
Fondly to prize the silence which he kept,  
And I as willingly did cherish mine,  
We met, and passed, like shadows. I have heard,  
From my good Host, that being crazed in brain  
By unrequited love, he scaled the rocks,  
Dived into caves, and pierced the matted woods,  
In hope to find some virtuous herb of power  
To cure his malady !"

The Vicar smiled,—  
" Alas ! before to-morrow's sun goes down  
His habitation will be here : for him  
That open grave is destined."

" Died he then  
Of pain and grief ?" the Solitary asked,  
" Do not believe it ; never could that be !"

" He loved," the Vicar answered, " deeply loved,  
Loved fondly, truly, fervently ; and dared  
At length to tell his love, but sued in vain ;  
Rejected, yea repelled ; and, if with scorn  
Upon the haughty maiden's brow, 'tis but

A high-prized plume which female Beauty wears  
In wantonness of conquest, or puts on  
To cheat the world, or from herself to hide  
Humiliation, when no longer free.

*That* he could brook, and glory in ;—but when  
The tidings came that she whom he had wooed  
Was wedded to another, and his heart  
Was forced to rend away its only hope ;  
Then, Pity could have scarcely found on earth  
An object worthier of regard than he,  
In the transition of that bitter hour !  
Lost was she, lost ; nor could the Sufferer say  
That in the act of preference he had been  
Unjustly dealt with ; but the Maid was gone !  
Had vanished from his prospects and desires ;  
Not by translation to the heavenly choir  
Who have put off their mortal spoils—ah no !  
She lives another's wishes to complete,—  
' Joy be their lot, and happiness,' he cried,  
' His lot and hers, as misery is mine !'

Such was that strong concussion ; but the Man  
Who trembled, trunk and limbs, like some huge oak  
By a fierce tempest shaken, soon resumed  
The steadfast quiet natural to a mind  
Of composition gentle and sedate,  
And, in its movements, circumspect and slow.  
To books, and to the long-forsaken desk,  
O'er which enchained by science he had loved

To bend, he stoutly re-addressed himself,  
Resolved to quell his pain, and search for truth  
With keener appetite (if that might be)  
And closer industry. Of what ensued  
Within the heart no outward sign appeared  
Till a betraying sickliness was seen  
To tinge his cheek ; and through his frame it crept  
With slow mutation unconcealable ;  
Such universal change as autumn makes  
In the fair body of a leafy grove  
Discoloured, then divested.

'Tis affirmed

By poets skilled in nature's secret ways  
That Love will not submit to be controlled  
By mastery :—and the good Man lacked not friends  
Who strove to instil this truth into his mind,  
A mind in all heart-mysteries unversed.  
'Go to the hills,' said one, 'remit a while  
'This baneful diligence :—at early morn  
'Court the fresh air, explore the heaths and woods ;  
'And, leaving it to others to foretell,  
'By calculations sage, the ebb and flow  
'Of tides, and when the moon will be eclipsed,  
'Do you, for your own benefit, construct  
'A calendar of flowers, plucked as they blow  
'Where health abides, and cheerfulness, and peace.'  
The attempt was made ;—'tis needless to report  
How hopelessly ; but innocence is strong,  
And an entire simplicity of mind,

A thing most sacred in the eye of Heaven ;  
That opens, for such sufferers, relief  
Within the soul, fountains of grace divine ;  
And doth commend their weakness and disease  
To Nature's care, assisted in her office  
By all the elements that round her wait  
To generate, to preserve, and to restore ;  
And by her beautiful array of forms  
Shedding sweet influence from above ; or pure  
Delight exhaling from the ground they tread."

" Impute it not to impatience, if," exclaimed  
The Wanderer, " I infer that he was healed  
By perseverance in the course prescribed."

" You do not err : the powers, that had been lost  
By slow degrees, were gradually regained ;  
The fluttering nerves composed ; the beating heart  
In rest established ; and the jarring thoughts  
To harmony restored.—But yon dark mould  
Will cover him, in the fulness of his strength,  
Hastily smitten by a fever's force ;  
Yet not with stroke so sudden as refused  
Time to look back with tenderness on her  
Whom he had loved in passion ; and to send  
Some farewell words—with one, but one, request ;  
That, from his dying hand, she would accept  
Of his possessions that which most he prized ;  
A book, upon whose leaves some chosen plants

By his own hand disposed with nicest care,  
In undecaying beauty were preserved ;  
Mute register, to him, of time and place,  
And various fluctuations in the breast ;  
To her, a monument of faithful love  
Conquered, and in tranquillity retained !

Close to his destined habitation, lies  
One who achieved a humbler victory,  
Though marvellous in its kind. A place there is  
High in these mountains, that allured a band  
Of keen adventurers to unite their pains  
In search of precious ore : they tried, were foiled—  
And all desisted, all, save him alone.  
He, taking counsel of his own clear thoughts,  
And trusting only to his own weak hands,  
Urged unremittingly the stubborn work,  
Unseconded, uncountenanced ; then, as time  
Passed on, while still his lonely efforts found  
No recompense, derided ; and at length,  
By many pitied, as insane of mind ;  
By others dreaded as the luckless thrall  
Of subterranean Spirits feeding hope  
By various mockery of sight and sound ;  
Hope after hope, encouraged and destroyed.  
—But when the lord of seasons had matured  
The fruits of earth through space of twice ten years,  
The mountain's entrails offered to his view  
And trembling grasp the long-deferred reward.

Not with more transport did Columbus greet  
A world, his rich discovery ! But our Swain,  
A very hero till his point was gained,  
Proved all unable to support the weight  
Of prosperous fortune. On the fields he looked  
With an unsettled liberty of thought,  
Wishes and endless schemes ; by daylight walked  
Giddy and restless ; ever and anon  
Quaffed in his gratitude immoderate cups ;  
And truly might be said to die of joy !  
He vanished ; but conspicuous to this day  
The path remains that linked his cottage-door  
To the mine's mouth ; a long, and slanting track,  
Upon the rugged mountain's stony side,  
Worn by his daily visits to and from  
The darksome centre of a constant hope.  
This vestige, neither force of beating rain,  
Nor the vicissitudes of frost and thaw  
Shall cause to fade, till ages pass away ;  
And it is named, in memory of the event,  
The PATH OF PERSEVERANCE."

"Thou from whom  
Man has his strength," exclaimed the Wanderer, "oh !  
Do thou direct it ! To the virtuous grant  
The penetrative eye which can perceive  
In this blind world the guiding vein of hope ;  
That, like this Labourer, such may dig their way,  
'Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified ;'  
Grant to the wise *his* firmness of resolve !"



“That prayer were not superfluous,” said the Priest,  
“Amid the noblest relics, proudest dust,  
That Westminster, for Britain’s glory, holds  
Within the bosom of her awful pile,  
Ambitiously collected. Yet the sigh,  
Which wafts that prayer to heaven, is due to all,  
Wherever laid, who living fell below  
Their virtue’s humbler mark ; a sigh of *pain*  
If to the opposite extreme they sank.  
How would you pity her who yonder rests ;  
Him, farther off ; the pair, who here are laid ;  
But, above all, that mixture of earth’s mould  
Whom sight of this green hillock to my mind  
Recalls !

*He* lived not till his locks were nipped  
By seasonable frost of age ; nor died  
Before his temples, prematurely forced  
To mix the manly brown with silver grey,  
Gave obvious instance of the sad effect  
Produced, when thoughtless Folly hath usurped  
The natural crown that sage Experience wears.  
Gay, volatile, ingenious, quick to learn,  
And prompt to exhibit all that he possessed  
Or could perform ; a zealous actor, hired  
Into the troop of mirth, a soldier, sworn  
Into the lists of giddy enterprise—  
Such was he ; yet, as if within his frame  
Too several souls alternately had lodged,  
Two sets of manners could the Youth put on ;

And, fraught with antics as the Indian bird  
That writhes and chatters in her wiry cage,  
Was graceful, when it pleased him, smooth and still  
As the mute swan that floats adown the stream,  
Or, on the waters of the unruffled lake,  
Anchors her placid beauty. Not a leaf,  
That flutters on the bough, more light than he ;  
And not a flower, that droops in the green shade,  
More winningly reserved ! If ye enquire  
How such consummate elegance was bred  
Amid these wilds, this answer may suffice ;  
'Twas Nature's will ; who sometimes undertakes,  
For the reproof of human vanity,  
Art to outstrip in her peculiar walk.  
Hence, for this Favourite, lavishly endowed  
With personal gifts, and bright instinctive wit,  
While both, embellishing each other, stood  
Yet farther recommended by the charm  
Of fine demeanour, and by dance and song,  
And skill in letters, every fancy shaped  
Fair expectations ; nor, when to the world's  
Capacious field forth went the Adventurer, there  
Were he and his attainments overlooked,  
Or scantily rewarded ; but all hopes,  
Cherished for him, he suffered to depart,  
Like blighted buds ; or clouds that mimicked land  
Before the sailor's eye ; or diamond drops  
That sparkling decked the morning grass ; or aught  
That *was* attractive, and hath ceased to be !

Yet, when this Prodigal returned, the rites  
Of joyful greeting were on him bestowed,  
Who, by humiliation undeterred,  
Sought for his weariness a place of rest  
Within his Father's gates.—Whence came he?—clothed  
In tattered garb, from hovels where abides  
Necessity, the stationary host  
Of vagrant poverty ; from rifted barns  
Where no one dwells but the wide-staring owl  
And the owl's prey ; from these bare haunts, to which  
He had descended from the proud saloon,  
He came, the ghost of beauty and of health,  
The wreck of gaiety ! But soon revived  
In strength, in power refitted, he renewed  
His suit to Fortune ; and she smiled again  
Upon a fickle Ingrate. Thrice he rose,  
Thrice sank as willingly. For he, whose nerves  
Were used to thrill with pleasure, while his voice  
Softly accompanied the tuneful harp,  
By the nice finger of fair ladies touched  
In glittering halls, was able to derive  
No less enjoyment from an abject choice.  
Who happier for the moment—who more blithe  
Than this fallen Spirit ? in those dreary holds  
His talents lending to exalt the freaks  
Of merry-making beggars,—now, provoked  
To laughter multiplied in louder peals  
By his malicious wit ; then, all enchained  
With mute astonishment, themselves to see

In their own arts outdone, their fame eclipsed,  
As by the very presence of the Fiend  
Who dictates and inspires illusive feats,  
For knavish purposes ! The city, too,  
(With shame I speak it) to her guilty bowers  
Allured him, sunk so low in self-respect  
As there to linger, there to eat his bread,  
Hired minstrel of voluptuous blandishment ;  
Charming the air with skill of hand or voice,  
Listen who would, be wrought upon who **might**,  
Sincerely wretched hearts, or falsely gay.  
—Such the too frequent tenour of his **boast**  
In ears that relished the report ;—but all  
Was from his Parents happily **concealed** ;  
Who saw enough for blame and **pitying** love.  
They also were permitted to **receive**  
His last, repentant breath ; and closed his eyes,  
No more to open on that **irksome** world  
Where he had long existed in the state  
Of a young fowl beneath one mother hatched,  
Though from another **sprung**, different in kind :  
Where he had **lived**, and could not cease to live,  
Distracted in **propensity** ; content  
With neither element of good or ill ;  
And yet **in** both rejoicing ; man unblest ;  
Of **contradictions** infinite the slave,  
Till his deliverance, when Mercy made him  
One with himself, and one with them that sleep.”

“Tis strange,” observed the Solitary, “strange  
It seems, and scarcely less than pitiful,  
That in a land where charity provides  
For all that can no longer feed themselves,  
A man like this should choose to bring his shame  
To the parental door ; and with his sighs  
Infect the air which he had freely breathed  
In happy infancy. He could not pine,  
Through lack of converse ; no—he must have found  
Abundant exercise for thought and speech,  
In his dividual being, self-reviewed,  
Self-catechised, self-punished.—Some there are  
Who, drawing near their final home, and much  
And daily longing that the same were reached,  
Would rather shun than seek the fellowship  
Of kindred mould.—Such haply here are laid ?”

“ Yes,” said the Priest, “ the Genius of our hills,  
Who seems, by these stupendous barriers cast  
Round his domain, desirous not alone  
To keep his own, but also to exclude  
All other progeny, doth sometimes lure,  
Even by this studied depth of privacy,  
The unhappy alien hoping to obtain  
Concealment, or seduced by wish to find,  
In place from outward molestation free,  
Helps to internal ease. Of many such  
Could I discourse ; but as their stay was brief,  
So their departure only left behind

Fancies, and loose conjectures. Other trace  
Survives, for worthy mention, of a pair  
Who, from the pressure of their several fates,  
Meeting as strangers, in a petty town  
Whose blue roofs ornament a distant reach  
Of this far-winding vale, remained as friends  
True to their choice ; and gave their bones in trust  
To this loved cemetery, here to lodge  
With unescutcheoned privacy interred  
Far from the family vault.—A Chieftain one  
By right of birth ; within whose spotless breast  
The fire of ancient Caledonia burned :  
He, with the foremost whose impatience hailed  
The Stuart, landing to resume, by force  
Of arms, the crown which bigotry had lost,  
Aroused his clan ; and, fighting at their head,  
With his brave sword endeavoured to prevent  
Culloden's fatal overthrow. Escaped  
From that disastrous rout, to foreign shores  
He fled ; and when the lenient hand of time  
Those troubles had appeased, he sought and gained,  
For his obscured condition, an obscure  
Retreat, within this nook of English ground.

The other, born in Britain's southern tract,  
Had fixed his milder loyalty, and placed  
His gentler sentiments of love and hate,  
There, where *they* placed them who in conscience prized  
The new succession, as a line of kings

Whose oath had virtue to protect the land  
Against the dire assaults of papacy  
And arbitrary rule. But launch thy bark  
On the distempered flood of public life,  
And cause for most rare triumph will be thine  
If, spite of keenest eye and steadiest hand,  
The stream, that bears thee forward, prove not, soon  
Or late, a perilous master. He—who oft,  
Beneath the battlements and stately trees  
That round his mansion cast a sober gloom,  
Had moralised on this, and other truths  
Of kindred import, pleased and satisfied—  
Was forced to vent his wisdom with a sigh  
Heaved from the heart in fortune's bitterness,  
When he had crushed a plentiful estate  
By ruinous contest, to obtain a seat  
In Britain's senate. Fruitless was the attempt :  
And while the uproar of that desperate strife  
Continued yet to vibrate on his ear,  
The vanquished Whig, under a *borrowed* name,  
(For the mere sound and echo of his own  
Haunted him with sensations of disgust  
That he was glad to lose) slunk from the world  
To the deep shade of those untravelled Wilds ;  
In which the Scottish Laird had long possessed  
An undisturbed abode. Here, then, they met,  
Two doughty champions ; flaming Jacobite  
And sullen Hanoverian ! You might think  
That losses and vexations, less severe

Than those which they had severally sustained,  
Would have inclined each to abate his zeal  
For his ungrateful cause ; no,—I have heard  
My reverend Father tell that, 'mid the calm  
Of that small town encountering thus, they filled,  
Daily, its bowling-green with harmless strife ;  
Plagued with uncharitable thoughts the church ;  
And vexed the market-place. But in the breasts  
Of these opponents gradually was wrought,  
With little change of general sentiment,  
Such change towards each other, that their days  
By choice were spent in constant fellowship ;  
And if, at times, they fretted with the yoke,  
Those very bickerings made them love it more.

A favourite boundary to their lengthened walks  
This Church-yard was. And, whether they had come  
Treading their path in sympathy and linked  
In social converse, or by some short space  
Discreetly parted to preserve the peace,  
One spirit seldom failed to extend its sway  
Over both minds, when they awhile had marked  
The visible quiet of this holy ground,  
And breathed its soothing air ;—the spirit of hope  
And saintly magnanimity ; that, spurning  
The field of selfish difference and dispute,  
And every care which transitory things,  
Earth and the kingdoms of the earth create,  
Doth, by a rapture of forgetfulness,



Preclude forgiveness, from the praise debarred,  
Which else the Christian virtue might have claimed.

There live who yet remember here to have seen  
Their courtly figures, seated on the stump  
Of an old yew, their favourite resting place.  
But as the remnant of the long-lived tree  
Was disappearing by a swift decay,  
They, with joint care, determined to erect,  
Upon its site, a dial, that might stand  
For public use preserved, and thus survive  
As their own private monument : for this  
Was the particular spot, in which they wished  
(And Heaven was pleased to accomplish the desire)  
That, undivided, their remains should lie.  
So, where the mouldered tree had stood, was raised  
Yon structure, framing, with the ascent of steps  
That to the decorated pillar lead,  
A work of art more sumptuous than might seem  
To suit this place ; yet built in no proud scorn  
Of rustic homeliness ; they only aimed  
To ensure for it respectful guardianship.  
Around the margin of the plate, whereon  
The shadow falls to note the stealthy hours,  
Winds an inscriptive legend."—At these words  
Thither we turned ; and, gathered, as we read,  
The appropriate sense, in Latin numbers couched :  
' *Time flies ; it is his melancholy task*  
*To bring, and bear away, delusive hopes,*

*And re-produce the troubles he destroys.  
But, while his blindness thus is occupied,  
Discerning Mortal! do thou serve the will  
Of Time's eternal Master, and that peace  
Which the world wants, shall be for thee confirmed."*

"Smooth verse, inspired by no unlettered Muse,"  
Exclaimed the Sceptic, "and the strain of thought  
Accords with nature's language ;—the soft voice  
Of yon white torrent falling down the rocks  
Speaks, less distinctly, to the same effect.  
If, then, their blended influence be not lost  
Upon our hearts, not wholly lost, I grant,  
Even upon mine, the more are we required  
To feel for those among our fellow-men,  
Who, offering no obeisance to the world,  
Are yet made desperate by 'too quick a sense  
Of constant infelicity,' cut off  
From peace like exiles on some barren rock,  
Their life's appointed prison ; not more free  
Than sentinels, between two armies, set,  
With nothing better, in the chill night air,  
Than their own thoughts to comfort them. Say why  
That ancient story of Prometheus chained ?  
The vulture, the inexhaustible repast  
Drawn from his vitals ? Say what meant the woes  
By Tantalus entailed upon his race,  
And the dark sorrows of the line of Thebes ?  
Fictions in form, but in their substance truths,

Tremendous truths ! familiar to the men  
Of long-past times, nor obsolete in ours.  
Exchange the shepherd's frock of native grey  
For robes with regal purple tinged ; convert  
The crook into a sceptre ; give the pomp  
Of circumstance, and here the tragic Muse  
Shall find apt subjects for her highest art.  
Amid the groves, under the shadowy hills,  
The generations are prepared ; the pangs,  
The internal pangs are ready ; the dread strife  
Of poor humanity's afflicted will  
Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

"Though," said the Priest in answer, "these be terms  
Which a divine philosophy rejects,  
We, whose established and unfailing trust  
Is in controlling Providence, admit  
That, through all stations, human life abounds  
With mysteries ;—for, if Faith were left untried,  
How could the might, that lurks within her, then  
Be shown ? her glorious excellence—that ranks  
Among the first of Powers and Virtues—proved ?  
Our system is not fashioned to preclude  
That sympathy which you for others ask ;  
And I could tell, not travelling for my theme  
Beyond these humble graves, of grievous crimes  
And strange disasters ; but I pass them by,  
Loth to disturb what Heaven hath hushed in peace.  
—Still less, far less, am I inclined to treat

Of Man degraded in his Maker's sight  
By the deformities of brutish vice :  
For, in such portraits, though a vulgar face  
And a coarse outside of repulsive life  
And unassuming manners might at once  
Be recognised by all—" Ah ! do not think,"  
The Wanderer somewhat eagerly exclaimed,  
" Wish could be ours that you, for such poor gain,  
(Gain shall I call it ?—gain of what ?—for whom ?)  
Should breathe a word tending to violate  
Your own pure spirit. Not a step we look for  
In slight of that forbearance and reserve  
Which common human-heartedness inspires,  
And mortal ignorance and frailty claim,  
Upon this sacred ground, if nowhere else."

" True," said the Solitary, " be it far  
From us to infringe the laws of charity.  
Let judgment here in mercy be pronounced ;  
This, self-respecting Nature prompts, and this  
Wisdom enjoins ; but if the thing we seek  
Be genuine knowledge, bear we then in mind  
How, from his lofty throne, the sun can fling  
Colours as bright on exhalations bred  
By weedy pool or pestilential swamp,  
As by the rivulet sparkling where it runs,  
Or the pellucid lake."

" Small risk," said I,  
" Of such illusion do we here incur ;

Temptation here is none to exceed the truth ;  
No evidence appears that they who rest  
Within this ground, were covetous of praise,  
Or of remembrance even, deserved or not.  
Green is the Church-yard, beautiful and green,  
Ridge rising gently by the side of ridge,  
A heaving surface, almost wholly free  
From interruption of sepulchral stones,  
And mantled o'er with aboriginal turf  
And everlasting flowers. These Dalesmen trust  
The lingering gleam of their departed lives  
To oral record, and the silent heart ;  
Depositories faithful and more kind  
Than fondest epitaph : for if those fail,  
What boots the sculptured tomb? And who can blame,  
Who rather would not envy, men that feel  
This mutual confidence ; if, from such source,  
The practice flow,— if thence, or from a deep  
And general humility in death ?  
Nor should I much condemn it, if it spring  
From disregard of time's destructive power,  
As only capable to prey on things  
Of earth, and human nature's mortal part.

Yet—in less simple districts, where we see  
Stone lift its forehead emulous of stone  
In courting notice ; and the ground all paved  
With commendations of departed worth ;  
Reading, where'er we turn, of innocent lives,

Of each domestic charity fulfilled,  
And sufferings meekly borne—I, for my part,  
Though with the silence pleased that here prevails,  
Among those fair recitals also range,  
Soothed by the natural spirit which they breathe.  
And, in the centre of a world whose soil  
Is rank with all unkindness, compassed round  
With such memorials, I have sometimes felt,  
It was no momentary happiness  
To have *one* Enclosure where the voice that speaks  
In envy or detraction is not heard ;  
Which malice may not enter ; where the traces  
Of evil inclinations are unknown ;  
Where love and pity tenderly unite  
With resignation ; and no jarring tone  
Intrudes, the peaceful concert to disturb  
Of amity and gratitude."

" Thus sanctioned,"

The Pastor said, " I willingly confine  
My narratives to subjects that excite  
Feelings with these accordant ; love, esteem,  
And admiration ; lifting up a veil,  
A sunbeam introducing among hearts  
Retired and covert ; so that ye shall have  
Clear images before your gladdened eyes  
Of nature's unambitious underwood,  
And flowers that prosper in the shade. And when  
I speak of such among my flock as swerved  
Or fell, those only shall be singled out  
Upon whose lapse, or error, something more

Than brotherly forgiveness may attend ;  
To such will we restrict our notice, else  
Better my tongue were mute.

And yet there are,  
I feel, good reasons why we should not leave  
Wholly untraced a more forbidding way.  
For strength to persevere and to support,  
And energy to conquer and repel ;—  
These elements of virtue, that declare  
The native grandeur of the human soul,  
Are oft-times not unprofitably shown  
In the perverseness of a selfish course :  
Truth every day exemplified, no less  
In the grey cottage by the murmuring stream  
Than in fantastic conqueror's roving camp,  
Or 'mid the factious senate unappalled  
While merciless proscription ebbs and flows.

There," said the Vicar, pointing as he spake,  
" A woman rests in peace ; surpassed by few  
In power of mind, and eloquent discourse.  
Tall was her stature ; her complexion dark  
And saturnine ; her head not raised to hold  
Converse with heaven, nor yet deprest towards earth,  
But in projection carried, as she walked  
For ever musing. Sunken were her eyes ;  
Wrinkled and furrowed with habitual thought  
Was her broad forehead ; like the brow of one  
Whose visual nerve shrinks from a painful glare

Of overpowering light.—While yet a child,  
She, 'mid the humble flowerets of the vale,  
Towered like the imperial thistle, not unfurnished  
With its appropriate grace, yet rather seeking  
To be admired, than coveted and loved.  
Even at that age she ruled, a sovereign queen,  
Over her comrades ; else their simple sports,  
Wanting all relish for her strenuous mind,  
Had crossed her only to be shunned with scorn.  
—Oh! pang of sorrowful regret for those  
Whom, in their youth, sweet study has enthralled,  
That they have lived for harsher servitude,  
Whether in soul, in body, or estate !  
Such doom was hers ; yet nothing could subdue  
Her keen desire of knowledge, nor efface  
Those brighter images by books imprest  
Upon her memory, faithfully as stars  
That occupy their places, and, though oft  
Hidden by clouds, and oft bedimmed by haze,  
Are not to be extinguished, nor impaired.

Two passions, both degenerate, for they both  
Began in honour, gradually obtained  
Rule over her, and vexed her daily life ;  
An unremitting, avaricious thrift ;  
And a strange thralldom of maternal love,  
That held her spirit, in its own despite,  
Bound by vexation, and regret, and scorn,  
Constrained forgiveness, and relenting vows,



And tears, in pride suppressed, in shame concealed—  
To a poor dissolute Son, her only child.  
—Her wedded days had opened with mishap,  
Whence dire dependence. What could she perform  
To shake the burthen off? Ah! there was felt,  
Indignantly, the weakness of her sex.  
She mused, resolved, adhered to her resolve;  
The hand grew slack in alms-giving, the heart  
Closed by degrees to charity; heaven's blessing  
Not seeking from that source, she placed her trust  
In ceaseless pains—and strictest parsimony,  
Which sternly hoarded all that could be spared,  
From each day's need, out of each day's least gain.

Thus all was re-established, and a pile  
Constructed, that sufficed for every end,  
Save the contentment of the builder's mind;  
A mind by nature indisposed to aught  
So placid, so inactive, as content;  
A mind intolerant of lasting peace,  
And cherishing the pang her heart deplored.  
Dread life of conflict! which I oft compared  
To the agitation of a brook that runs  
Down a rocky mountain, buried now and lost  
In silent pools, now in strong eddies chained;  
But never to be charmed to gentleness:  
Its best attainment fits of such repose  
As timid eyes might shrink from fathoming.

A sudden illness seized her in the strength  
Of life's autumnal season.—Shall I tell  
How on her bed of death the Matron lay,  
To Providence submissive, so she thought ;  
But fretted, vexed, and wrought upon, almost  
To anger, by the malady that griped  
Her prostrate frame with unrelaxing power,  
As the fierce eagle fastens on the lamb ?  
She prayed, she moaned ;—her husband's sister watched  
Her dreary pillow, waited on her needs ;  
And yet the very sound of that kind foot  
Was anguish to her ears ! ‘ And must she rule,’  
This was the dying Woman heard to say  
In bitterness, ‘ and must she rule and reign,  
‘ Sole Mistress of this house, when I am gone ?  
‘ Sit by my fire, possess what I possessed,  
‘ Tend what I tended, calling it her own ! ’  
Enough ;—I fear, too much.—One vernal evening,  
While she was yet in prime of health and strength,  
I well remember, while I passed her door,  
Musing with loitering step, and upward eye  
Turned towards the planet Jupiter that hung  
Above the centre of the vale, a voice  
Roused me, her voice ; it said, ‘ That glorious Star  
‘ In its untroubled element will shine  
‘ As now it shines, when we are laid in earth  
‘ And safe from all our sorrows.’—She is safe,  
And her uncharitable acts, I trust,

And harsh unkindnesses, are all forgiven ;  
Though, in this vale, remembered with deep awe !”

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THE Vicar paused ; and toward a seat advanced,  
A long stone-seat, fixed in the Church-yard wall ;  
Part shaded by cool sycamore, and part  
Offering a sunny resting-place to them  
Who seek the House of worship, while the bells  
Yet ring with all their voices, or before  
The last hath ceased its solitary knoll.  
Beneath the shade we all sate down ; and there  
His office, uninvited, he resumed.

“ As on a sunny bank, a tender lamb  
Lurks in safe shelter from the winds of March,  
Screened by its parent, so that little mound  
Lies guarded by its neighbour ; the small heap  
Speaks for itself ; an Infant there doth rest ;  
The sheltering hillock is the Mother’s grave.  
If mild discourse, and manners that conferred  
A natural dignity on humblest rank ;  
If gladsome spirits, and benignant looks,  
That for a face not beautiful did more  
Than beauty for the fairest face can do ;  
And if religious tenderness of heart,  
Grieving for sin, and penitential tears  
Shed when the clouds had gathered and distained  
The spotless ether of a maiden life ;

If these may make a hallowed spot of earth  
More holy in the sight of God or Man ;  
Then, o'er that mould, a sanctity shall brood  
Till the stars sicken at the day of doom.

Ah ! what a warning for a thoughtless man,  
Could field or grove, could any spot of earth,  
Show to his eye an image of the pangs  
Which it hath witnessed ; render back an echo  
Of the sad steps by which it hath been trod !  
There, by her innocent Baby's precious grave,  
Yea, doubtless, on the turf that roofs her own,  
The Mother oft was seen to stand, or kneel  
In the broad day, a weeping Magdalene.  
Now she is not ; the swelling turf reports  
Of the fresh shower, but of poor Ellen's tears  
Is silent ; nor is any vestige left  
Of the path worn by mournful tread of her  
Who, at her heart's light bidding, once had moved  
In virgin fearlessness, with step that seemed  
Caught from the pressure of elastic turf  
Upon the mountains gemmed with morning dew,  
In the prime hour of sweetest scents and airs.  
—Serious and thoughtful was her mind ; and yet,  
By reconciliation exquisite and rare,  
The form, port, motions of this Cottage-girl  
Were such as might have quickened and inspired  
A Titian's hand, addrest to picture forth  
Oread or Dryad glancing through the shade

What time the hunter's earliest horn is heard  
Startling the golden hills.

A wide-spread elm  
Stands in our valley, named THE JOYFUL TREE ;  
From dateless usage which our peasants hold  
Of giving welcome to the first of May  
By dances round its trunk.—And if the sky  
Permit, like honours, dance and song, are paid  
To the Twelfth Night, beneath the frosty stars  
Or the clear moon. The queen of these gay sports,  
If not in beauty yet in sprightly air,  
Was hapless Ellen.—No one touched the ground  
So deftly, and the nicest maiden's locks  
Less gracefully were braided ;—but this praise,  
Methinks, would better suit another place.

She loved, and fondly deemed herself beloved.  
—The road is dim, the current unperceived,  
The weakness painful and most pitiful,  
By which a virtuous woman, in pure youth,  
May be delivered to distress and shame.  
Such fate was hers.—The last time Ellen danced,  
Among her equals, round THE JOYFUL TREE,  
She bore a secret burthen ; and full soon  
Was left to tremble for a breaking vow,—  
Then, to bewail a sternly-broken vow,  
Alone, within her widowed Mother's house.  
It was the season of unfolding leaves,  
Of days advancing toward their utmost length,

And small birds singing happily to mates  
Happy as they. With spirit-saddening power  
Winds pipe through fading woods ; but those blithe notes  
Strike the deserted to the heart ; I speak  
Of what I know, and what we feel within.

—Beside the cottage in which Ellen dwelt  
Stands a tall ash-tree ; to whose topmost twig  
A thrush resorts, and annually chants,  
At morn and evening from that naked perch,  
While all the undergrove is thick with leaves,  
A time-beguiling ditty, for delight  
Of his fond partner, silent in the nest.

—‘ Ah why,’ said Ellen, sighing to herself,  
‘ Why do not words, and kiss, and solemn pledge ;  
‘ And nature that is kind in woman’s breast,  
‘ And reason that in man is wise and good,  
‘ And fear of him who is a righteous judge ;  
‘ Why do not these prevail for human life,  
‘ To keep two hearts together, that began  
‘ Their spring-time with one love, and that have need  
‘ Of mutual pity and forgiveness, sweet  
‘ To grant, or be received ; while that poor bird,  
‘ —O come and hear him ! Thou who hast to me  
‘ Been faithless, hear him, though a lowly creature,  
‘ One of God’s simple children that yet know not  
‘ The universal Parent, how he sings  
‘ As if he wished the firmament of heaven  
‘ Should listen, and give back to him the voice  
‘ Of his triumphant constancy and love ;

‘The proclamation that he makes, how far  
‘His darkness doth transcend our fickle light!’

Such was the tender passage, not by me  
Repeated without loss of simple phrase,  
Which I perused, even as the words had been  
Committed by forsaken Ellen’s hand  
To the blank margin of a Valentine,  
Bedropped with tears. ’Twill please you to be told  
That, studiously withdrawing from the eye  
Of all companionship, the Sufferer yet  
In lonely reading found a meek resource :  
How thankful for the warmth of summer days,  
When she could slip into the cottage-barn,  
And find a secret oratory there ;  
Or, in the garden, under friendly veil  
Of their long twilight, pore upon her book  
By the last lingering help of open sky,  
Till the dark night dismissed her to her bed !  
Thus did a waking fancy sometimes lose  
The unconquerable pang of despised love.

A kindlier passion opened on her soul  
When that poor Child was born. Upon its face  
She looked as on a pure and spotless gift  
Of unexpected promise, where a grief  
Or dread was all that had been thought of,—joy  
Far livelier than bewildered traveller feels,  
Amid a perilous waste that all night long

Hath harassed him toiling through fearful storm,  
When he beholds the first pale speck serene  
Of day-spring, in the gloomy east, revealed,  
And greets it with thanksgiving. ‘Till this hour,’  
Thus, in her Mother’s hearing Ellen spake,  
‘There was a stony region in my heart ;  
‘But He, at whose command the parchèd rock  
‘Was smitten, and poured forth a quenching stream,  
‘Hath softened that obduracy, and made  
‘Unlooked-for gladness in the desert place,  
‘To save the perishing ; and, henceforth, I look  
‘Upon the light with cheerfulness, for thee  
‘My Infant ! and for that good Mother dear,  
‘Who bore me ; and hath prayed for me in vain ;—  
‘Yet not in vain ; it shall not be in vain.’  
She spake, nor was the assurance unfulfilled ;  
And if heart-rending thoughts would oft return,  
They stayed not long.—The blameless Infant grew ;  
The Child whom Ellen and her Mother loved  
They soon were proud of ; tended it and nursed,  
A soothing comforter, although forlorn ;  
Like a poor singing-bird from distant lands ;  
Or a choice shrub, which he, who passes by  
With vacant mind, not seldom may observe  
Fair-flowering in a thinly-peopled house,  
Whose window, somewhat sadly, it adorns.

Through four months’ space the Infant drew its food  
From the maternal breast ; then scruples rose ;



Thoughts, which the rich are free from, came and crossed  
The fond affection. She no more could bear  
By her offence to lay a twofold weight  
On a kind parent willing to forget  
Their slender means : so, to that parent's care  
Trusting her child, she left their common home,  
And with contented spirit undertook  
A Foster-mother's office.

'Tis, perchance,  
Unknown to you that in these simple vales  
The natural feeling of equality  
Is by domestic service unimpaired ;  
Yet, though such service be, with us, removed  
From sense of degradation, not the less  
The ungentle mind can easily find means  
To impose severe restraints and laws unjust,  
Which hapless Ellen now was doomed to feel :  
For (blinded by an over-anxious dread  
Of such excitement and divided thought  
As with her office would but ill accord)  
The pair, whose infant she was bound to nurse,  
Forbad her all communion with her own :  
Week after week, the mandate they enforced.  
—So near ! yet not allowed, upon that sight  
To fix her eyes—alas ! 'twas hard to bear !  
But worse affliction must be borne—far worse ;  
For 'tis Heaven's will—that, after a disease  
Begun and ended within three days' space,  
Her child should die ; as Ellen now exclaimed,

Her own—deserted child!—Once, only once,  
She saw it in that mortal malady ;  
And, on the burial-day, could scarcely gain  
Permission to attend its obsequies.  
She reached the house, last of the funeral train ;  
And some one, as she entered, having chanced  
To urge unthinkingly their prompt departure,  
‘ Nay,’ said she, with commanding look, a spirit  
Of anger never seen in her before,  
‘ Nay, ye must wait my time ! ’ and down she sate,  
And by the unclosed coffin kept her seat  
Weeping and looking, looking on and weeping,  
Upon the last sweet slumber of her Child,  
Until at length her soul was satisfied.

You see the Infant’s Grave ; and to this spot,  
The Mother, oft as she was sent abroad,  
On whatsoever errand, urged her steps :  
Hither she came ; here stood, and sometimes knelt  
In the broad day, a rueful Magdalene !  
So call her ; for not only she bewailed  
A mother’s loss, but mourned in bitterness  
Her own transgression ; penitent sincere  
As ever raised to heaven a streaming eye !  
—At length the parents of the foster-child,  
Noting that in despite of their commands  
She still renewed and could not but renew  
Those visitations, ceased to send her forth ;  
Or, to the garden’s narrow bounds, confined.

I failed not to remind them that they erred ;  
For holy Nature might not thus be crossed,  
Thus wronged in woman's breast : in vain I pleaded—  
But the green stalk of Ellen's life was snapped,  
And the flower drooped ; as every eye could see,  
It hung its head in mortal languishment.  
—Aided by this appearance, I at length  
Prevailed ; and, from those bonds released, she went  
Home to her mother's house.

The Youth was fled ;

The rash betrayer could not face the shame  
Or sorrow which his senseless guilt had caused ;  
And little would his presence, or proof given  
Of a relenting soul, have now availed ;  
For, like a shadow, he was passed away  
From Ellen's thoughts ; had perished to her mind  
For all concerns of fear, or hope, or love,  
Save only those which to their common shame,  
And to his moral being, appertained :  
Hope from that quarter would, I know, have brought  
A heavenly comfort ; there she recognised  
An unrelaxing bond, a mutual need ;  
There, and, as seemed, there only.

She had built,

Her fond maternal heart had built, a nest  
In blindness all too near the river's edge ;  
That work a summer flood with hasty swell  
Had swept away ; and now her Spirit longed  
For its last flight to heaven's security.

—The bodily frame was wasted day by day ;  
Meanwhile, relinquishing all other cares,  
Her mind she strictly tutored to find peace  
And pleasure in endurance. Much she thought,  
And much she read ; and brooded feelingly  
Upon her own unworthiness. To me,  
As to a spiritual comforter and friend,  
Her heart she opened ; and no pains were spared  
To mitigate, as gently as I could,  
The sting of self-reproach, with healing words.  
Meek Saint ! through patience glorified on earth !  
In whom, as by her lonely hearth she sate,  
The ghastly face of cold decay put on  
A sun-like beauty, and appeared divine !  
May I not mention—that, within those walls,  
In due observance of her pious wish,  
The congregation joined with me in prayer  
For her soul's good ? Nor was that office vain.  
—Much did she suffer : but, if any friend,  
Beholding her condition, at the sight  
Gave way to words of pity or complaint,  
She stilled them with a prompt reproof, and said,  
' He who afflicts me knows what I can bear ;  
' And, when I fail, and can endure no more,  
' Will mercifully take me to himself.'  
So, through the cloud of death, her Spirit passed  
Into that pure and unknown world of love  
Where injury cannot come :—and here is laid  
The mortal Body by her Infant's side."

The Vicar ceased ; and downcast looks made known  
That each had listened with his inmost heart.  
For me, the emotion scarcely was less strong  
Or less benign than that which I had felt  
When, seated near my venerable Friend,  
Beneath those shady elms, from him I heard  
The story that retraced the slow decline  
Of Margaret sinking on the lonely heath,  
With the neglected house to which she clung.  
—I noted that the Solitary's cheek  
Confessed the power of nature.—Pleased though sad,  
More pleased than sad, the grey-haired Wanderer sate ;  
Thanks to his pure imaginative soul  
Capacious and serene ; his blameless life,  
His knowledge, wisdom, love of truth, and love  
Of human kind ! He was it who first broke  
The pensive silence, saying :—

“ Blest are they  
Whose sorrow rather is to suffer wrong  
Than to do wrong, albeit themselves have erred.  
This tale gives proof that Heaven most gently deals  
With such, in their affliction.—Ellen's fate,  
Her tender spirit, and her contrite heart,  
Call to my mind dark hints which I have heard  
Of one who died within this vale, by doom  
Heavier, as his offence was heavier far.  
Where Sir, I pray you, where are laid the bones  
Of Wilfred Armathwaite ? ”

The Vicar answered,  
“ In that green nook, close by the Church-yard wall,  
Beneath yon hawthorn, planted by myself  
In memory and for warning, and in sign  
Of sweetness where dire anguish had been known,  
Of reconciliation after deep offence—  
There doth he rest. No theme his fate supplies  
For the smooth glozings of the indulgent world ;  
Nor need the windings of his devious course  
Be here retraced ;—enough that, by mishap  
And venial error, robbed of competence,  
And her obsequious shadow, peace of mind,  
He craved a substitute in troubled joy ;  
Against his conscience rose in arms, and, braving  
Divine displeasure, broke the marriage-vow.  
That which he had been weak enough to do  
Was misery in remembrance ; he was stung,  
Stung by his inward thoughts, and by the smiles  
Of wife and children stung to agony.  
Wretched at home, he gained no peace abroad ;  
Ranged through the mountains, slept upon the earth,  
Asked comfort of the open air, and found  
No quiet in the darkness of the night,  
No pleasure in the beauty of the day.  
His flock he slighted : his paternal fields  
Became a clog to him, whose spirit wished  
To fly, but whither ! And this gracious Church,  
That wears a look so full of peace and hope  
And love, benignant mother of the vale,

How fair amid her brood of cottages !  
She was to him a sickness and reproach.  
Much to the last remained unknown : but this  
Is sure, that through remorse and grief he died ;  
Though pitied among men, absolved by God,  
He could not find forgiveness in himself ;  
Nor could endure the weight of his own shame.

Here rests a Mother. But from her I turn  
And from her grave.—Behold—upon that ridge,  
That, stretching boldly from the mountain side,  
Carries into the centre of the vale  
Its rocks and woods—the Cottage where she dwelt ;  
And where yet dwells her faithful Partner, left  
(Full eight years past) the solitary prop  
Of many helpless Children. I begin  
With words that might be prelude to a tale  
Of sorrow and dejection ; but I feel  
No sadness, when I think of what mine eyes  
See daily in that happy family.  
—Bright garland form they for the pensive brow  
Of their undrooping Father's widowhood,  
Those six fair Daughters, budding yet—not one,  
Not one of all the band, a full-blown flower !  
Deprest, and desolate of soul, as once  
That Father was, and filled with anxious fear,  
Now, by experience taught, he stands assured,  
That God, who takes away, yet takes not half  
Of what he seems to take ; or gives it back,

Not to our prayer, but far beyond our prayer ;  
He gives it—the boon produce of a soil  
Which our endeavours have refused to till,  
And hope hath never watered. The Abode,  
Whose grateful owner can attest these truths,  
Even were the object nearer to our sight,  
Would seem in no distinction to surpass  
The rudest habitations. Ye might think  
That it had sprung self-raised from earth, or grown  
Out of the living rock, to be adorned  
By nature only ; but, if thither led,  
Ye would discover, then, a studious work  
Of many fancies, prompting many hands.

Brought from the woods the honeysuckle twines  
Around the porch, and seems, in that trim place,  
A plant no longer wild ; the cultured rose  
There blossoms, strong in health, and will be soon  
Roof-high ; the wild pink crowns the garden-wall,  
And with the flowers are intermingled stones  
Sparry and bright, rough scatterings of the hills.  
These ornaments, that fade not with the year,  
A hardy Girl continues to provide ;  
Who, mounting fearlessly the rocky heights,  
Her Father's prompt attendant, does for him  
All that a boy could do, but with delight  
More keen and prouder daring ; yet hath she,  
Within the garden, like the rest, a bed  
For her own flowers and favourite herbs, a space,



By sacred charter, holden for her use.  
—These, and whatever else the garden bears  
Of fruit or flower, permission asked or not,  
I freely gather ; and my leisure draws  
A not unfrequent pastime from the sight  
Of the bees murmuring round their sheltered hives  
In that enclosure ; while the mountain rill,  
That sparkling thrids the rocks, attunes his voice  
To the pure course of human life which there  
Flows on in solitude. But, when the gloom  
Of night is falling round my steps, then most  
This Dwelling charms me ; often I stop short,  
(Who could refrain ?) and feed by stealth my sight  
With prospect of the company within,  
Laid open through the blazing window :—there  
I see the eldest Daughter at her wheel  
Spinning amain, as if to overtake  
The never-halting time ; or, in her turn,  
Teaching some Novice of the sisterhood  
That skill in this or other household work,  
Which, from her Father's honoured hand, herself,  
While she was yet a little-one, had learned.  
Mild Man ! he is not gay, but they are gay ;  
And the whole house seems filled with gaiety.  
—Thrice happy, then, the Mother may be deemed,  
The Wife, from whose consolatory grave  
I turned, that ye in mind might witness where,  
And how, her Spirit yet survives on earth ! ”

**END OF THE SIXTH BOOK.**

# THE EXCURSION.

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## BOOK VII.

THE CHURCH-YARD AMONG THE MOUNTAINS  
CONTINUED.

## ARGUMENT.

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## BOOK SEVENTH.

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### THE CHURCH-YARD AMONG THE MOUNTAINS

CONTINUED.

WHILE thus from theme to theme the Historian passed,  
The words he uttered, and the scene that lay  
Before our eyes, awakened in my mind  
Vivid remembrance of those long-past hours ;  
When, in the hollow of some shadowy vale,  
(What time the splendor of the setting sun  
Lay beautiful on Snowdon's sovereign brow,  
On Cader Idris, or huge Penmanmaur)  
A wandering Youth, I listened with delight  
To pastoral melody or warlike air,  
Drawn from the chords of the ancient British harp  
By some accomplished Master, while he sate  
Amid the quiet of the green recess,  
And there did inexhaustibly dispense  
An interchange of soft or solemn tunes,  
Tender or blithe ; now, as the varying mood

Of his own spirit urged,—now, as a voice  
From youth or maiden, or some honoured chief  
Of his compatriot villagers (that hung  
Around him, drinking in the impassioned notes  
Of the time-hallowed minstrelsy) required  
For their heart's ease or pleasure. Strains of power  
Were they, to seize and occupy the sense ;  
But to a higher mark than song can reach  
Rose this pure eloquence. And, when the stream  
Which overflowed the soul was passed away,  
A consciousness remained that it had left,  
Deposited upon the silent shore  
Of memory, images and precious thoughts,  
That shall not die, and cannot be destroyed.

“ These grassy heaps lie amicably close,”  
Said I, “ like surges heaving in the wind  
Along the surface of a mountain pool :  
Whence comes it, then, that yonder we behold  
Five graves, and only five, that rise together  
Unsociably sequestered, and encroaching  
On the smooth play-ground of the village-school ? ”

The Vicar answered. “ No disdainful pride  
In them who rest beneath, nor any course  
Of strange or tragic accident, hath helped  
To place those hillocks in that lonely guise.  
—Once more look forth, and follow with your sight  
The length of road that from yon mountain's base

Through bare enclosures stretches, 'till its line  
Is lost within a little tuft of trees ;  
Then, reappearing in a moment, quits  
The cultured fields ; and up the heathy waste,  
Mounts, as you see, in mazes serpentine,  
Led towards an easy outlet of the vale.  
That little shady spot, that sylvan tuft,  
By which the road is hidden, also hides  
A cottage from our view ; though I discern  
(Ye scarcely can) amid its sheltering trees  
The smokeless chimney-top.—

All unembowered

And naked stood that lowly Parsonage  
(For such in truth it is, and appertains  
To a small Chapel in the vale beyond)  
When hither came its last Inhabitant.  
Rough and forbidding were the choicest roads  
By which our northern wilds could then be crossed ;  
And into most of these secluded vales  
Was no access for wain, heavy or light.  
So, at his dwelling-place the Priest arrived  
With store of household goods, in panniers slung  
On sturdy horses graced with jingling bells,  
And on the back of more ignoble beast ;  
That, with like burthen of effects most prized  
Or easiest carried, closed the motley train.  
Young was I then, a school-boy of eight years ;  
But still, methinks, I see them as they passed  
In order, drawing toward their wished-for home,

—Rocked by the motion of a trusty ass  
Two ruddy children hung, a well-poised freight,  
Each in his basket nodding drowsily ;  
Their bonnets, I remember, wreathed with flowers,  
Which told it was the pleasant month of June ;  
And, close behind, the comely Matron rode,  
A woman of soft speech and gracious smile,  
And with a lady's mien.—From far they came,  
Even from Northumbrian hills ; yet theirs had been  
A merry journey, rich in pastime, cheered  
By music, prank, and laughter-stirring jest ;  
And freak put on, and arch word dropped—to swell  
The cloud of fancy and uncouth surmise  
That gathered round the slowly-moving train.  
—‘ Whence do they come ? and with what errand charged ?  
‘ Belong they to the fortune-telling tribe  
‘ Who pitch their tents under the green-wood tree ?  
‘ Or Strollers are they, furnished to enact  
‘ Fair Rosamond, and the Children of the Wood,  
‘ And, by that whiskered tabby's aid, set forth  
‘ The lucky venture of sage Whittington,  
‘ When the next village hears the show announced  
‘ By blast of trumpet ? ’ Plenteous was the growth  
Of such conjectures, overheard, or seen  
On many a staring countenance portrayed  
Of boor or burgher, as they marched along.  
And more than once their steadiness of face  
Was put to proof, and exercise supplied  
To their inventive humour, by stern looks,



And questions in authoritative tone,  
From some staid guardian of the public peace,  
Checking the sober steed on which he rode,  
In his suspicious wisdom ; oftener still,  
By notice indirect, or blunt demand  
From traveller halting in his own despite,  
A simple curiosity to ease :  
Of which adventures, that beguiled and cheered  
Their grave migration, the good pair would tell,  
With undiminished glee, in hoary age.

A Priest he was by function ; but his course  
From his youth up, and high as manhood's noon,  
(The hour of life to which he then was brought)  
Had been irregular, I might say, wild ;  
By books unsteadied, by his pastoral care  
Too little checked. An active, ardent mind ;  
A fancy pregnant with resource and scheme  
To cheat the sadness of a rainy day ;  
Hands apt for all ingenious arts and games ;  
A generous spirit, and a body strong  
To cope with stoutest champions of the bowl ;—  
Had earned for him sure welcome, and the rights  
Of a prized visitant, in the jolly hall  
Of country 'squire ; or at the statelier board  
Of duke or earl, from scenes of courtly pomp  
Withdrawn,—to while away the summer hours  
In condescension among rural guests.

With these high comrades he had revelled long,  
Frolicked industriously, a simple Clerk  
By hopes of coming patronage beguiled  
Till the heart sickened. So, each loftier aim  
Abandoning and all his showy friends,  
For a life's stay (slender it was, but sure)  
He turned to this secluded chapelry ;  
That had been offered to his doubtful choice  
By an unthought-of patron. Bleak and bare  
They found the cottage, their allotted home ;  
Naked without, and rude within ; a spot  
With which the Cure not long had been endowed :  
And far remote the chapel stood,—remote,  
And, from his Dwelling unapproachable,  
Save through a gap high in the hills, an opening  
Shadeless and shelterless, by driving showers  
Frequented, and beset with howling winds.  
Yet cause was none, whate'er regret might hang  
On his own mind, to quarrel with the choice  
Or the necessity that fixed him here ;  
Apart from old temptations, and constrained  
To punctual labour in his sacred charge.  
See him a constant preacher to the poor !  
And visiting, though not with saintly zeal,  
Yet, when need was, with no reluctant will,  
The sick in body, or distress in mind ;  
And, by as salutary change, compelled  
To rise from timely sleep, and meet the day  
With no engagement, in his thoughts, more proud

Or splendid than his garden could afford,  
His fields, or mountains by the heath-cock ranged,  
Or the wild brooks ; from which he now returned  
Contented to partake the quiet meal  
Of his own board, where sat his gentle Mate  
And three fair Children, plentifully fed  
Though simply, from their little household farm ;  
Nor wanted timely treat of fish or fowl  
By nature yielded to his practised hand ;—  
To help the small but certain comings-in  
Of that spare benefice. Yet not the less  
Theirs was a hospitable board, and theirs  
A charitable door.

So days and years  
Passed on ;—the inside of that rugged house  
Was trimmed and brightened by the Matron's care,  
And gradually enriched with things of price,  
Which might be lacked for use or ornament.  
What, though no soft and costly sofa there  
Insidiously stretched out its lazy length,  
And no vain mirror glittered on the walls,  
Yet were the windows of the low abode  
By shutters weather-fenced, which at once  
Repelled the storm and deadened its loud roar.  
There snow-white curtains hung in decent folds ;  
Tough moss, and long-enduring mountain plants,  
That creep along the ground with sinuous trail,  
Were nicely braided ; and composed a work  
Like Indian mats, that with appropriate grace

Lay at the threshold and the inner doors ;  
And a fair carpet woven of homespun wool  
But tintured daintily with florid hues,  
For seemliness and warmth, on festal days,  
Covered the smooth blue slabs of mountain-stone  
With which the parlour-floor, in simplest guise  
Of pastoral homesteads, had been long inlaid.

Those pleasing works the Housewife's skill produced :  
Meanwhile the unsedentary Master's hand  
Was busier with his task—to rid, to plant,  
To rear for food, for shelter, and delight ;  
A thriving covert ! And when wishes, formed  
In youth, and sanctioned by the riper mind,  
Restored me to my native valley, here  
To end my days ; well pleased was I to see  
The once-bare cottage, on the mountain-side,  
Screen'd from assault of every bitter blast ;  
While the dark shadows of the summer leaves  
Danced in the breeze, chequering its mossy roof.  
Time, which had thus afforded willing help  
To beautify with nature's fairest growths  
This rustic tenement, had gently shed,  
Upon its Master's frame, a wintry grace ;  
The comeliness of unenfeebl'd age.

But how could I say, gently ? for he still  
Retained a flashing eye, a burning palm,  
A stirring foot, a head which beat at nights  
Upon its pillow with a thousand schemes.

Few likings had he dropped, few pleasures lost ;  
Generous and charitable, prompt to serve ;  
And still his harsher passions kept their hold—  
Anger and indignation. Still he loved  
The sound of titled names, and talked in glee  
Of long-past banquetings with high-born friends :  
Then, from those lulling fits of vain delight  
Uproused by recollected injury, railed  
At their false ways disdainfully,—and oft  
In bitterness, and with a threatening eye  
Of fire, incensed beneath its hoary brow.  
—Those transports, with staid looks of pure good-will,  
And with soft smile, his consort would reprove.  
She, far behind him in the race of years,  
Yet keeping her first mildness, was advanced  
Far nearer, in the habit of her soul,  
To that still region whither all are bound.  
Him might we liken to the setting sun  
As seen not seldom on some gusty day,  
Struggling and bold, and shining from the west  
With an inconstant and unmellowed light ;  
She was a soft attendant cloud, that hung  
As if with wish to veil the restless orb ;  
From which it did itself imbibe a ray  
Of pleasing lustre.—But no more of this ;  
I better love to sprinkle on the sod  
That now divides the pair, or rather say,  
That still unites them, praises, like heaven's dew,  
Without reserve descending upon both.

Our very first in eminence of years  
This old Man stood, the patriarch of the Vale !  
And, to his unmolested mansion, death  
Had never come, through space of forty years ;  
Sparing both old and young in that abode.  
Suddenly then they disappeared : not twice  
Had summer scorched the fields ; not twice had fallen,  
On those high peaks, the first autumnal snow,  
Before the greedy visiting was closed,  
And the long-privileged house left empty—swept  
As by a plague. Yet no rapacious plague  
Had been among them ; all was gentle death,  
One after one, with intervals of peace.  
A happy consummation ! an accord  
Sweet, perfect, to be wished for ! save that here  
Was something which to mortal sense might sound  
Like harshness,—that the old grey-headed Sire,  
The oldest, he was taken last, survived  
When the meek Partner of his age, his Son,  
His Daughter, and that late and high-prized gift,  
His little smiling Grandchild, were no more.

‘ All gone, all vanished ! he deprived and bare,  
‘ How will he face the remnant of his life ?  
‘ What will become of him ? ’ we said, and mused  
In sad conjectures—‘ Shall we meet him now  
‘ Haunting with rod and line the craggy brooks ?  
‘ Or shall we overhear him, as we pass,  
‘ Striving to entertain the lonely hours

‘ With music ? ’ (for he had not ceased to touch  
The harp or viol which himself had framed,  
For their sweet purposes, with perfect skill.)  
‘ What titles will he keep ? will he remain  
‘ Musician, gardener, builder, mechanist,  
‘ A planter, and a rearer from the seed ?  
‘ A man of hope and forward-looking mind  
‘ Even to the last ! ’—Such was he, unsubdued.  
But Heaven was gracious ; yet a little while,  
And this Survivor, with his cheerful throng  
Of open projects, and his inward hoard  
Of unsunned griefs, too many and too keen,  
Was overcome by unexpected sleep,  
In one blest moment. Like a shadow thrown  
Softly and lightly from a passing cloud,  
Death fell upon him, while reclined he lay  
For noontide solace on the summer grass,  
The warm lap of his mother earth : and so,  
Their lenient term of separation past,  
That family (whose graves you there behold)  
By yet a higher privilege once more  
Were gathered to each other.”

Calm of mind

And silence waited on these closing words ;  
Until the Wanderer (whether moved by fear  
Lest in those passages of life were some  
That might have touched the sick heart of his Friend  
Too nearly, or intent to reinforce  
His own firm spirit in degree deprest

By tender sorrow for our mortal state)  
Thus silence broke :—" Behold a thoughtless Man  
From vice and premature decay preserved  
By useful habits, to a fitter soil  
Transplanted ere too late.—The hermit, lodged  
Amid the untrodden desert, tells his beads,  
With each repeating its allotted prayer,  
And thus divides and thus relieves the time ;  
Smooth task, with *his* compared, whose mind could string,  
Not scantily, bright minutes on the thread  
Of keen domestic anguish ; and beguile  
A solitude, unchosen, unprofessed ;  
Till gentlest death released him.

Far from us

Be the desire—too curiously to ask  
How much of this is but the blind result  
Of cordial spirits and vital temperament,  
And what to higher powers is justly due.  
But you, Sir, know that in a neighbouring vale  
A Priest abides before whose life such doubts  
Fall to the ground ; whose gifts of nature lie  
Retired from notice, lost in attributes  
Of reason, honourably effaced by debts  
Which her poor treasure-house is content to owe,  
And conquests over her dominion gained,  
To which her frowardness must needs submit.  
In this one Man is shown a temperance—proof  
Against all trials ; industry severe  
And constant as the motion of the day ;



Stern self-denial round him spread, with shade  
That might be deemed forbidding, did not there  
All generous feelings flourish and rejoice ;  
Forbearance, charity in deed and thought,  
And resolution competent to take  
Out of the bosom of simplicity  
All that her holy customs recommend,  
And the best ages of the world prescribe.  
—Preaching, administering, in every work  
Of his sublime vocation, in the walks  
Of worldly intercourse between man and man,  
And in his humble dwelling, he appears  
A labourer, with moral virtue girt,  
With spiritual graces, like a glory, crowned.”

“ Doubt can be none,” the Pastor said, “ for whom  
This portraiture is sketched. The great, the good,  
The well-beloved, the fortunate, the wise,—  
These titles emperors and chiefs have borne,  
Honour assumed or given : and him, the WONDERFUL,  
Our simple shepherds, speaking from the heart,  
Deservedly have styled.—From his abode  
In a dependent chapelry, that lies  
Behind yon hill, a poor and rugged wild,  
Which in his soul he lovingly embraced,  
And, having once espoused, would never quit ;  
Hither, ere long, that lowly, great, good Man  
Will be conveyed. An unelaborate stone  
May cover him ; and by its help, perchance,

A century shall hear his name pronounced,  
With images attendant on the sound ;  
Then, shall the slowly gathering twilight close  
In utter night ; and of his course remain  
No cognizable vestiges, no more  
Than of this breath, which shapes itself in words  
To speak of him, and instantly dissolves.

Noise is there not enough in doleful war,  
But that the heaven-born poet must stand forth,  
And lend the echoes of his sacred shell,  
To multiply and aggravate the din ?  
Pangs are there not enough in hopeless love—  
And, in requited passion, all too much  
Of turbulence, anxiety, and fear—  
But that the minstrel of the rural shade  
Must tune his pipe, insidiously to nurse  
The perturbation in the suffering breast,  
And propagate its kind, far as he may ?  
—Ah who (and with such rapture as befits  
The hallowed theme) will rise and celebrate  
The good man's purposes and deeds ; retrace  
His struggles, his discomfitures deplore,  
His triumphs hail, and glorify his end  
Now, and for evermore ? Who will do this—  
That virtue, like the fumes and vapoury clouds  
Through fancy's heat redounding in the brain,  
And like the soft infections of the heart,  
By charm of measured words may spread o'er field,  
Hamlet, and town ; and piety survive

Upon the lips of men in hall or bower ;  
Not for reproof, but high and warm delight,  
And grave encouragement, by song inspired ?  
—Vain thought ! but wherefore murmur or repine ?  
The memory of the just survives in heaven :  
And, without sorrow, will this ground receive  
That venerable clay. Meanwhile the best  
Of what it holds confines us to degrees  
In excellence less difficult to reach,  
And milder worth : nor need we travel far  
From those to whom our last regards were paid,  
For such example.

Almost at the root  
Of that tall pine, the shadow of whose bare  
And slender stem, while here I sit at eve,  
Oft stretches toward me, like a long straight path  
Traced faintly in the greensward ; there, beneath  
A plain blue stone, a gentle Dalesman lies,  
From whom, in early childhood, was withdrawn  
The precious gift of hearing. He grew up  
From year to year in loneliness of soul ;  
And this deep mountain valley was to him  
Soundless, with all its streams. The bird of dawn  
Did never rouse this Cottager from sleep  
With startling summons ; not for his delight  
The vernal cuckoo shouted ; not for him  
Murmured the labouring bee. When stormy winds  
Were working the broad bosom of the lake  
Into a thousand thousand sparkling waves,

Rocking the trees, or driving cloud on cloud  
Along the sharp edge of yon lofty crags,  
The agitated scene before his eye  
Was silent as a picture : evermore  
Were all things silent, wheresoe'er he moved.  
Yet, by the solace of his own pure thoughts  
Upheld, he dutcously pursued the round  
Of rural labours ; the steep mountain-side  
Ascended with his staff and faithful dog ;  
The plough he guided, and the scythe he swayed ;  
And the ripe corn before his sickle fell  
Among the jocund reapers. For himself,  
All watchful and industrious as he was,  
He wrought not : neither field nor flock he owned :  
No wish for wealth had place within his mind ;  
Nor husband's love, nor father's hope or care.

Though born a younger brother, need was none  
That from the floor of his paternal home  
He should depart, to plant himself anew.  
And when, mature in manhood, he beheld  
His parents laid in earth, no loss ensued  
Of rights to him ; but he remained well pleased,  
By the pure bond of independent love,  
An inmate of a second family ;  
The fellow-labourer and friend of him  
To whom the small inheritance had fallen.  
—Nor deem that his mild presence was a weight  
That pressed upon his brother's house ; for books

Were ready comrades whom he could not tire ;  
Of whose society the blameless Man  
Was never satiate. Their familiar voice,  
Even to old age, with unabated charm  
Beguiled his leisure hours ; refreshed his thoughts ;  
Beyond its natural elevation raised  
His introverted spirit ; and bestowed  
Upon his life an outward dignity  
Which all acknowledged. The dark winter night,  
The stormy day, each had its own resource ;  
Song of the muses, sage historic tale,  
Science severe, or word of holy Writ  
Announcing immortality and joy  
To the assembled spirits of just men  
Made perfect, and from injury secure.  
—Thus soothed at home, thus busy in the field,  
To no perverse suspicion he gave way,  
No languor, peevishness, nor vain complaint :  
And they, who were about him, did not fail  
In reverence, or in courtesy ; they prized  
His gentle manners : and his peaceful smiles,  
The gleams of his slow-varying countenance,  
Were met with answering sympathy and love.

At length, when sixty years and five were told,  
A slow disease insensibly consumed  
The powers of nature : and a few short steps  
Of friends and kindred bore him from his home  
(Yon cottage shaded by the woody crags)

To the profounder stillness of the grave.  
—Nor was his funeral denied the grace  
Of many tears, virtuous and thoughtful grief ;  
Heart-sorrow rendered sweet by gratitude.  
And now that monumental stone preserves  
His name, and unambitiously relates  
How long, and by what kindly outward aids,  
And in what pure contentedness of mind,  
The sad privation was by him endured.  
—And yon tall pine-tree, whose composing sound  
Was wasted on the good Man's living ear,  
Hath now its own peculiar sanctity ;  
And, at the touch of every wandering breeze,  
Murmurs, not idly, o'er his peaceful grave.

Soul-cheering Light, most bountiful of things !  
Guide of our way, mysterious comforter !  
Whose sacred influence, spread through earth and heaven,  
We all too thanklessly participate,  
Thy gifts were utterly withheld from him  
Whose place of rest is near yon ivied porch.  
Yet, of the wild brooks ask if he complained ;  
Ask of the channelled rivers if they held  
A safer, easier, more determined, course.  
What terror doth it strike into the mind  
To think of one, who cannot see, advancing  
Straight toward some precipice's airy brink !  
But, timely warned, *He* would have stayed his steps ;  
Protected, say enlightened, by his ear,

And on the very edge of vacancy  
Not more endangered than a man whose eye  
Beholds the gulf beneath.—No floweret blooms  
Throughout the lofty range of these rough hills,  
Nor in the woods, that could from him conceal  
Its birth-place ; none whose figure did not live  
Upon his touch. The bowels of the earth  
Enriched with knowledge his industrious mind ;  
The ocean paid him tribute from the stores  
Lodged in her bosom ; and, by science led,  
His genius mounted to the plains of heaven.  
—Methinks I see him—how his eye-balls rolled,  
Beneath his ample brow, in darkness paired,—  
But each instinct with spirit ; and the frame  
Of the whole countenance alive with thought,  
Fancy, and understanding ; while the voice  
Discoursed of natural or moral truth  
With eloquence, and such authentic power,  
That, in his presence, humbler knowledge stood  
Abashed, and tender pity overawed.”

“ A noble—and, to unreflecting minds,  
A marvellous spectacle,” the Wanderer said,  
“ Beings like these present ! But proof abounds  
Upon the earth that faculties, which seem  
Extinguished, do not, *therefore*, cease to be.  
And to the mind among her powers of sense  
This transfer is permitted,—not alone  
That the bereft their recompense may win ;  
But for remoter purposes of love

And charity ; nor last nor least for this,  
That to the imagination may be given  
A type and shadow of an awful truth ;  
How, likewise, under sufferance divine,  
Darkness is banished from the realms of death,  
By man's imperishable spirit, quelled.  
Unto the men who see not as we see  
Futurity was thought, in ancient times,  
To be laid open, and they prophesied.  
And know we not that from the blind have flowed  
The highest, holiest, raptures of the lyre ;  
And wisdom married to immortal verse ?”

Among the humbler Worthies, at our feet  
Lying insensible to human praise,  
Love, or regret,—*whose* lineaments would next  
Have been portrayed, I guess not ; but it chanced  
That, near the quiet church-yard where we sate,  
A team of horses, with a ponderous freight  
Pressing behind, adown a rugged slope,  
Whose sharp descent confounded their array,  
Came at that moment, ringing noisily.

“ Here,” said the Pastor, “ do we muse, and mourn  
The waste of death ; and lo ! the giant oak  
Stretched on his bier—that massy timber wain ;  
Nor fail to note the Man who guides the team.”

He was a peasant of the lowest class :  
Grey locks profusely round his temples hung



In clustering curls, like ivy, which the bite  
Of winter cannot thin ; the fresh air lodged  
Within his cheek, as light within a cloud ;  
And he returned our greeting with a smile.  
When he had passed, the Solitary spake ;  
“ A Man he seems of cheerful yesterdays  
And confident to-morrows ; with a face  
Not worldly-minded, for it bears too much  
Of Nature's impress,—gaiety and health,  
Freedom and hope ; but keen, withal, and shrewd.  
His gestures note,—and hark ! his tones of voice  
Are all vivacious as his mien and looks.”

The Pastor answered. “ You have read him well.  
Year after year is added to his store  
With *silent* increase : summers, winters—past,  
Past or to come ; yea, boldly might I say,  
Ten summers and ten winters of a space  
That lies beyond life's ordinary bounds,  
Upon his sprightly vigour cannot fix  
The obligation of an anxious mind,  
A pride in having, or a fear to lose ;  
Possessed like outskirts of some large domain,  
By any one more thought of than by him  
Who holds the land in fee, its careless lord !  
Yet is the creature rational, endowed  
With foresight ; hears, too, every sabbath day,  
The christian promise with attentive ear ;  
Nor will, I trust, the Majesty of Heaven

Reject the incense offered up by him,  
Though of the kind which beasts and birds present  
In grove or pasture ; cheerfulness of soul,  
From trepidation and repining free.

How many scrupulous worshippers fall down  
Upon their knees, and daily homage pay  
Less worthy, less religious even, than his !

This qualified respect, the old Man's due,  
Is paid without reluctance ; but in truth," \*  
(Said the good Vicar with a fond half-smile)

" I feel at times a motion of despite  
Towards one, whose bold contrivances and skill,  
As you have seen, bear such conspicuous part  
In works of havoc ; taking from these vales,  
One after one, their proudest ornaments.  
Full oft his doings leave me to deplore  
Tall ash-tree, sown by winds, by vapours nursed,  
In the dry crannies of the pendent rocks ;  
Light birch, aloft upon the horizon's edge,  
A veil of glory for the ascending moon ;  
And oak whose roots by noontide dew were damped,  
And on whose forehead inaccessible  
The raven lodged in safety.—Many a ship  
Launched into Morecamb-bay, to *him* hath owed  
Her strong knee-timbers, and the mast that bears  
The loftiest of her pendants ; He, from park  
Or forest, fetched the enormous axle-tree  
That whirls (how slow itself !) ten thousand spindles :  
And the vast engine labouring in the mine,

Content with meaner prowess, must have lacked  
The trunk and body of its marvellous strength,  
If his undaunted enterprise had failed  
Among the mountain coves.

Yon household fir,  
A guardian planted to fence off the blast,  
But towering high the roof above, as if  
Its humble destination were forgot—  
That sycamore, which annually holds  
Within its shade, as in a stately tent  
On all sides open to the fanning breeze,  
A grave assemblage, seated while they shear  
The fleece-encumbered flock—the JOYFUL ELM,  
Around whose trunk the maidens dance in May—  
And the LORD'S OAK—would plead their several rights  
In vain, if he were master of their fate ;  
His sentence to the axe would doom them all.  
But, green in age and lusty as he is,  
And promising to keep his hold on earth  
Less, as might seem, in rivalry with men  
Than with the forest's more enduring growth,  
His own appointed hour will come at last ;  
And, like the haughty Spoilers of the world,  
This keen Destroyer, in his turn, must fall.

Now from the living pass we once again :  
From Age," the Priest continued, "turn your thoughts ;  
From Age, that often unlamented drops,  
And mark that daisied hillock, three spans long !

—Seven lusty Sons sate daily round the board  
Of Gold-rill side ; and, when the hope had ceased  
Of other progeny, a Daughter then  
Was given, the crowning bounty of the whole ;  
And so acknowledged with a tremulous joy  
Felt to the centre of that heavenly calm  
With which by nature every mother's soul  
Is stricken in the moment when her throes  
Are ended, and her ears have heard the cry  
Which tells her that a living child is born ;  
And she lies conscious, in a blissful rest,  
That the dread storm is weathered by them both.

The Father—him at this unlooked-for gift  
A bolder transport seizes. From the side  
Of his bright hearth, and from his open door,  
Day after day the gladness is diffused  
To all that come, almost to all that pass ;  
Invited, summoned, to partake the cheer  
Spread on the never-empty board, and drink  
Health and good wishes to his new-born girl,  
From cups replenished by his joyous hand.  
—Those seven fair brothers variously were moved  
Each by the thoughts best suited to his years :  
But most of all and with most thankful mind  
The hoary grandsire felt himself enriched ;  
A happiness that ebbed not, but remained  
To fill the total measure of his soul !  
—From the low tenement, his own abode,

Whither, as to a little private cell,  
He had withdrawn from bustle, care, and noise,  
To spend the sabbath of old age in peace,  
Once every day he duteously repaired  
To rock the cradle of the slumbering babe :  
For in that female infant's name he heard  
The silent name of his departed wife ;  
Heart-stirring music ! hourly heard that name ;  
Full blest he was, ' Another Margaret Green,'  
Oft did he say, ' was come to Gold-rill side.'

Oh ! pang unthought of, as the precious boon  
Itself had been unlooked-for ; oh ! dire stroke  
Of desolating anguish for them all !  
—Just as the Child could totter on the floor,  
And, by some friendly finger's help upstayed,  
Range round the garden walk, while she perchance  
Was catching at some novelty of spring,  
Ground-flower, or glossy insect from its cell  
Drawn by the sunshine—at that hopeful season  
The winds of March, smiting insidiously,  
Raised in the tender passage of the throat  
Viewless obstruction ; whence, all unforewarned,  
The household lost their pride and soul's delight.  
—But time hath power to soften all regrets,  
And prayer and thought can bring to worst distress  
Due resignation. Therefore, though some tears  
Fail not to spring from either Parent's eye  
Oft as they hear of sorrow like their own,

Yet this departed Little-one, too long  
The innocent troubler of their quiet, sleeps  
In what may now be called a peaceful bed.

On a bright day—so calm and bright, it seemed  
To us, with our sad spirits, heavenly-fair—  
These mountains echoed to an unknown sound;  
A volley, thrice repeated o'er the Corse  
Let down into the hollow of that grave,  
Whose shelving sides are red with naked mould.  
Ye rains of April, duly wet this earth !  
Spare, burning sun of midsummer, these sods,  
That they may knit together, and therewith  
Our thoughts unite in kindred quietness !  
Nor so the Valley shall forget her loss.  
Dear Youth, by young and old alike beloved,  
To me as precious as my own !—Green herbs  
May creep (I wish that they would softly creep)  
Over thy last abode, and we may pass  
Reminded less imperiously of thee ;—  
The ridge itself may sink into the breast  
Of earth, the great abyss, and be no more ;  
Yet shall not thy remembrance leave our hearts,  
Thy image disappear !

The Mountain-ash

No eye can overlook, when 'mid a grove  
Of yet unfaded trees she lifts her head  
Decked with autumnal berries, that outshine  
Spring's richest blossoms ; and ye may have marked,

By a brook-side or solitary tarn,  
How she her station doth adorn : the pool  
Glows at her feet, and all the gloomy rocks  
Are brightened round her." In his native vale  
Such and so glorious did this Youth appear ;  
A sight that kindled pleasure in all hearts  
By his ingenuous beauty, by the gleam  
Of his fair eyes, by his capacious brow,  
By all the graces with which nature's hand  
Had lavishly arrayed him. As old bards  
Tell in their idle songs of wandering gods,  
Pan or Apollo, veiled in human form :  
Yet, like the sweet-breathed violet of the shade,  
Discovered in their own despite to sense  
Of mortals (if such fables without blame  
May find chance-mention on this sacred ground)  
So, through a simple rustic garb's disguise,  
And through the impediment of rural cares,  
In him revealed a scholar's genius shone ;  
And so, not wholly hidden from men's sight,  
In him the spirit of a hero walked  
Our unpretending valley.—How the coit  
Whizzed from the Stripling's arm ! If touched by him,  
The inglorious foot-ball mounted to the pitch  
Of the lark's flight,—or shaped a rainbow curve,  
Aloft, in prospect of the shouting field !  
The indefatigable fox had learned  
To dread his perseverance in the chase.  
With admiration would he lift his eyes

To the wide-ruling eagle, and his hand  
Was loth to assault the majesty he loved :  
Else had the strongest fastnesses proved weak  
To guard the royal brood. The sailing glead,  
The wheeling swallow, and the darting snipe,  
The sportive sea-gull dancing with the waves,  
And cautious water-fowl, from distant climes,  
Fixed at their seat, the centre of the Mere,  
Were subject to young Oswald's steady aim,  
And lived by his forbearance.

From the coast

Of France a boastful Tyrant hurled his threats ;  
Our Country marked the preparation vast  
Of hostile forces ; and she called—with voice  
That filled her plains, that reached her utmost shores,  
And in remotest vales was heard—to arms !  
—Then, for the first time, here you might have seen  
The shepherd's grey to martial scarlet changed,  
That flashed uncouthly through the woods and fields.  
Ten hardy Striplings, all in bright attire,  
And graced with shining weapons, weekly marched,  
From this lone valley, to a central spot  
Where, in assemblage with the flower and choice  
Of the surrounding district, they might learn  
The rudiments of war ; ten—hardy, strong,  
And valiant ; but young Oswald, like a chief  
And yet a modest comrade, led them forth  
From their shy solitude, to face the world,  
With a gay confidence and seemly pride ;



Measuring the soil beneath their happy feet  
Like Youths released from labour, and yet bound  
To most laborious service, though to them  
A festival of unencumbered ease ;  
The inner spirit keeping holiday,  
Like vernal ground to sabbath sunshine left.

Oft have I marked him, at some leisure hour,  
Stretched on the grass, or seated in the shade,  
Among his fellows, while an ample map  
Before their eyes lay carefully outspread,  
From which the gallant teacher would discourse,  
Now pointing this way, and now that.—‘ Here flows,’  
Thus would he say, ‘ the Rhine, that famous stream !  
‘ Eastward, the Danube toward this inland sea,  
‘ A mightier river, winds from realm to realm ;  
‘ And, like a serpent, shows his glittering back  
‘ Bspotted—with innumerable isles :  
‘ Here reigns the Russian, there the Turk ; observe  
‘ His capital city ! ’ Thence, along a tract  
Of livelier interest to his hopes and fears  
His finger moved, distinguishing the spots  
Where wide-spread conflict then most fiercely raged ;  
Nor left unstigmatized those fatal fields  
On which the sons of mighty Germany  
Were taught a base submission.—‘ Here behold  
‘ A nobler race, the Switzers, and their land,  
‘ Vales deeper far than these of ours, huge woods,  
‘ And mountains white with everlasting snow ! ’

—And, surely, he, that spake with kindling brow,  
Was a true patriot, hopeful as the best  
Of that young peasantry, who, in our days,  
Have fought and perished for Helvetia's rights—  
Ah, not in vain !—or those who, in old time,  
For work of happier issue, to the side  
Of Tell came trooping from a thousand huts,  
When he had risen alone ! No braver Youth  
Descended from Judean heights, to march  
With righteous Joshua ; nor appeared in arms  
When grove was felled, and altar was cast down,  
And Gideon blew the trumpet, soul-inflamed,  
And strong in hatred of idolatry.”

The Pastor, even as if by these last words  
Raised from his seat within the chosen shade,  
Moved toward the grave ;—instinctively his steps  
We followed ; and my voice with joy exclaimed :  
“ Power to the Oppressors of the world is given,  
A might of which they dream not. Oh ! the curse,  
To be the awakener of divinest thoughts,  
Father and founder of exalted deeds ;  
And, to whole nations bound in servile straits,  
The liberal donor of capacities  
More than heroic ! this to be, nor yet  
Have sense of one connatural wish, nor yet  
Deserve the least return of human thanks ;  
Winning no recompense but deadly hate  
With pity mixed, astonishment with scorn ! ”

When this involuntary strain had ceased,  
The Pastor said : " So Providence is served ;  
The forkèd weapon of the skies can send  
Illumination into deep, dark holds,  
Which the mild sunbeam hath not power to pierce.  
Ye Thrones that have defied remorse, and cast  
Pity away, soon shall ye quake with *fear* !  
For, not unconscious of the mighty debt  
Which to outrageous wrong the sufferer owes,  
Europe, through all her habitable bounds,  
Is thirsting for *their* overthrow, who yet  
Survive, as pagan temples stood of yore,  
By horror of their impious rites, preserved ;  
Are still permitted to extend their pride,  
Like cedars on the top of Lebanon  
Darkening the sun.

But less impatient thoughts,  
And love ' all hoping and expecting all,'  
This hallowed grave demands, where rests in peace  
A humble champion of the better cause ;  
A Peasant-youth, so call him, for he asked  
No higher name ; in whom our country showed,  
As in a favourite son, most beautiful.  
In spite of vice, and misery, and disease,  
Spread with the spreading of her wealthy arts,  
England, the ancient and the free, appeared  
In him to stand before my swimming eyes,  
Unconquerably virtuous and secure.  
—No more of this, lest I offend his dust :  
Short was his life, and a brief tale remains.

One summer's day—a day of annual pomp  
And solemn chase—from morn to sultry noon  
His steps had followed, fleetest of the fleet,  
The red-deer driven along its native heights  
With cry of hound and horn ; and, from that toil  
Returned with sinews weakened and relaxed,  
This generous Youth, too negligent of self,  
Plunged—'mid a gay and busy throng convened  
To wash the fleeces of his Father's flock—  
Into the chilling flood. Convulsions dire  
Seized him, that self-same night ; and through the space  
Of twelve ensuing days his frame was wrenched,  
Till nature rested from her work in death.  
To him, thus snatched away, his comrades paid  
A soldier's honours. At his funeral hour  
Bright was the sun, the sky a cloudless blue—  
A golden lustre slept upon the hills ;  
And if by chance a stranger, wandering there,  
From some commanding eminence had looked  
Down on this spot, well pleased would he have seen  
A glittering spectacle ; but every face  
Was pallid : seldom hath that eye been moist  
With tears, that wept not then ; nor were the few  
Who from their dwellings came not forth to join  
In this sad service, less disturbed than we.  
They started at the tributary peal  
Of instantaneous thunder, which announced,  
Through the still air, the closing of the Grave ;  
And distant mountains echoed with a sound  
Of lamentation, never heard before !”

The Pastor ceased.—My venerable Friend  
Victoriously upraised his clear bright eye ;  
And, when that eulogy was ended, stood  
Enrapt, as if his inward sense perceived  
The prolongation of some still response,  
Sent by the ancient Soul of this wide land,  
The Spirit of its mountains and its seas,  
Its cities, temples, fields, its awful power,  
Its rights and virtues—by that Deity  
Descending, and supporting his pure heart  
With patriotic confidence and joy.  
And, at the last of those memorial words,  
The pining Solitary turned aside ;  
Whether through manly instinct to conceal  
Tender emotions spreading from the heart  
To his worn cheek ; or with uneasy shame  
For those cold humours of habitual spleen  
That, fondly seeking in dispraise of man  
Solace and self-excuse, had sometimes urged  
To self-abuse a not ineloquent tongue.  
— Right toward the sacred Edifice his steps  
Had been directed ; and we saw him now  
Intent upon a monumental stone,  
Whose uncouth form was grafted on the wall,  
Or rather seemed to have grown into the side  
Of the rude pile ; as oft-times trunks of trees,  
Where nature works in wild and craggy spots,  
Are seen incorporate with the living rock—  
To endure for aye. The Vicar, taking note

Of his employment, with a courteous smile  
Exclaimed—

“ The sagest Antiquarian’s eye  
That task would foil ;” then, letting fall his voice  
While he advanced, thus spake : “ Tradition tells  
That, in Eliza’s golden days, a Knight  
Came on a war-horse sumptuously attired,  
And fixed his home in this sequestered vale.  
’Tis left untold if here he first drew breath,  
Or as a stranger reached this deep recess,  
Unknowing and unknown. A pleasing thought  
I sometimes entertain, that haply bound  
To Scotland’s court in service of his Queen,  
Or sent on mission to some northern Chief  
Of England’s realm, this vale he might have seen  
With transient observation ; and thence caught  
An image fair, which, brightening in his soul  
When joy of war and pride of chivalry  
Languished beneath accumulated years,  
Had power to draw him from the world, resolved  
To make that paradise his chosen home  
To which his peaceful fancy oft had turned.

Vague thoughts are these ; but, if belief may rest  
Upon unwritten story fondly traced  
From sire to son, in this obscure retreat  
The Knight arrived, with pomp of spear and shield,  
And borne upon a Charger covered o’er  
With gilded housings. And the lofty Steed—

His sole companion, and his faithful friend,  
Whom he, in gratitude, let loose to range  
In fertile pastures—was beheld with eyes  
Of admiration and delightful awe,  
By those untravelled Dalesmen. With less pride,  
Yet free from touch of envious discontent,  
They saw a mansion at his bidding rise,  
Like a bright star, amid the lowly band  
Of their rude homesteads. Here the Warrior dwelt;  
And, in that mansion, children of his own,  
Or kindred, gathered round him. As a tree  
That falls and disappears, the house is gone ;  
And, through improvidence or want of love  
For ancient worth and honourable things,  
The spear and shield are vanished, which the Knight  
Hung in his rustic hall. One ivied arch  
Myself have seen, a gateway, last remains  
Of that foundation in domestic care  
Raised by his hands. And now no trace is left  
Of the mild-hearted Champion, save this stone,  
Faithless memorial ! and his family name  
Borne by yon clustering cottages, that sprang  
From out the ruins of his stately lodge :  
These, and the name and title at full length,—  
**Sir Alfred Erthing**, with appropriate words  
Accompanied, still extant, in a wreath  
Or posy, girding round the several fronts  
Of three clear-sounding and harmonious bells,  
That in the steeple hang, his pious gift."

“ So fails, so languishes, grows dim, and dies,”  
The grey-haired Wanderer pensively exclaimed,  
“ All that this world is proud of. From their spheres  
The stars of human glory are cast down ;  
Perish the roses and the flowers of kings,  
Princes, and emperors, and the crowns and palms  
Of all the mighty, withered and consumed !  
Nor is power given to lowliest innocence  
Long to protect her own. The man himself  
Departs ; and soon is spent the line of those  
Who, in the bodily image, in the mind,  
In heart or soul, in station or pursuit,  
Did most resemble him. Degrees and ranks,  
Fraternities and orders—heaping high  
New wealth upon the burthen of the old,  
And placing trust in privilege confirmed  
And re-confirmed—are scoffed at with a smile  
Of greedy foretaste, from the secret stand  
Of Desolation, aimed : to slow decline  
These yield, and these to sudden overthrow :  
Their virtue, service, happiness, and state  
Expire ; and nature’s pleasant robe of green,  
Humanity’s appointed shroud, enwraps  
Their monuments and their memory. The vast Frame  
Of social nature changes evermore  
Her organs and her members with decay  
Restless, and restless generation, powers  
And functions dying and produced at need,—  
And by this law the mighty whole subsists :



With an ascent and progress in the main ;  
Yet, oh ! how disproportioned to the hopes  
And expectations of self-flattering minds !

The courteous Knight, whose bones are here interred,  
Lived in an age conspicuous as our own  
For strife and ferment in the minds of men ;  
Whence alteration in the forms of things,  
Various and vast. A memorable age !  
Which did to him assign a pensive lot—  
To linger 'mid the last of those bright clouds  
That, on the steady breeze of honour, sailed  
In long procession calm and beautiful.  
He who had seen his own bright order fade,  
And its devotion gradually decline,  
(While war, relinquishing the lance and shield,  
Her temper changed, and bowed to other laws)  
Had also witnessed, in his morn of life,  
That violent commotion, which o'erthrew,  
In town and city and sequestered glen,  
Altar, and cross, and church of solemn roof,  
And old religious house—pile after pile ;  
And shook their tenants out into the fields,  
Like wild beasts without home ! Their hour was come ;  
But why no softening thought of gratitude,  
No just remembrance, scruple, or wise doubt ?  
Benevolence is mild ; nor borrows help,  
Save at worst need, from bold impetuous force,  
Fitliest allied to anger and revenge.

But Human-kind rejoices in the might  
Of mutability ; and airy hopes,  
Dancing around her, hinder and disturb  
Those meditations of the soul that feed  
The retrospective virtues. Festive songs  
Break from the maddened nations at the sight  
Of sudden overthrow ; and cold neglect  
Is the sure consequence of slow decay.

Even," said the Wanderer, "as that courteous Knight,  
Bound by his vow to labour for redress  
Of all who suffer wrong, and to enact  
By sword and lance the law of gentleness,  
(If I may venture of myself to speak,  
Trusting that not incongruously I blend  
Low things with lofty) I too shall be doomed  
To outlive the kindly use and fair esteem  
Of the poor calling which my youth embraced  
With no unworthy prospect. But enough ;  
—Thoughts crowd upon me—and 'twere seemlier now  
To stop, and yield our gracious Teacher thanks  
For the pathetic records which his voice  
Hath here delivered ; words of heartfelt truth,  
Tending to patience when affliction strikes ;  
To hope and love ; to confident repose  
In God ; and reverence for the dust of Man."

# THE EXCURSION.



## BOOK VIII.

### THE PARSONAGE.

## ARGUMENT.

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## BOOK EIGHTH.

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### THE PARSONAGE.

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THE pensive Sceptic of the lonely vale  
To those acknowledgments subscribed his own,  
With a sedate compliance, which the Priest  
Failed not to notice, inly pleased, and said :—  
“ If ye, by whom invited I began  
These narratives of calm and humble life,  
Be satisfied, 'tis well,—the end is gained ;  
And, in return for sympathy bestowed  
And patient listening, thanks accept from me.  
—Life, death, eternity ! momentous themes  
Are they—and might demand a seraph's tongue,  
Were they not equal to their own support ;  
And therefore no incompetence of mine  
Could do them wrong. The universal forms  
Of human nature, in a spot like this,  
Present themselves at once to all men's view :  
Ye wished for act and circumstance, that make  
The individual known and understood ;

And such as my best judgment could select  
From what the place afforded, have been given ;  
Though apprehensions crossed me that my zeal  
To his might well be likened, who unlocks  
A cabinet stored with gems and pictures—draws  
His treasures forth, soliciting regard  
To this, and this, as worthier than the last,  
Till the spectator, who awhile was pleased  
More than the exhibitor himself, becomes  
Weary and faint, and longs to be released.  
—But let us hence ! my dwelling is in sight,  
And there—”

At this the Solitary shrunk  
With backward will ; but, wanting not address  
That inward motion to disguise, he said  
To his Compatriot, smiling as he spake :  
—“ The peaceable remains of this good Knight  
Would be disturbed, I fear, with wrathful scorn,  
If consciousness could reach him where he lies  
That one, albeit of these degenerate times,  
Deploring changes past, or dreading change  
Foreseen, had dared to couple, even in thought,  
The fine vocation of the sword and lance  
With the gross aims and body-bending toil  
Of a poor brotherhood who walk the earth  
Pitied, and, where they are not known, despised.

Yet, by the good Knight’s leave, the two estates  
Are graced with some resemblance. Errant those,

Exiles and wanderers—and the like are these ;  
Who, with their burthen, traverse hill and dale,  
Carrying relief for nature's simple wants.  
—What though no higher recompense be sought  
Than honest maintenance, by irksome toil  
Full oft procured, yet may they claim respect,  
Among the intelligent, for what this course  
Enables them to be and to perform.  
Their tardy steps give leisure to observe,  
While solitude permits the mind to feel ;  
Instructs, and prompts her to supply defects  
By the division of her inward self  
For grateful converse : and to these poor men  
Nature (I but repeat your favourite boast)  
Is bountiful—go wheresoe'er they may ;  
Kind nature's various wealth is all their own.  
Versed in the characters of men ; and bound,  
By ties of daily interest, to maintain  
Conciliatory manners and smooth speech ;  
Such have been, and still are in their degree,  
Examples efficacious to refine  
Rude intercourse ; apt agents to expel,  
By importation of unlooked-for arts,  
Barbarian torpor, and blind prejudice ;  
Raising, through just gradation, savage life  
To rustic, and the rustic to urbane.  
—Within their moving magazines is lodged  
Power that comes forth to quicken and exalt  
Affections seated in the mother's breast,

And in the lover's fancy ; and to feed  
The sober sympathies of long-tried friends.  
—By these Itinerants, as experienced men,  
Counsel is given ; contention they appease  
With gentle language ; in remotest wilds,  
Tears wipe away, and pleasant tidings bring ;  
Could the proud quest of chivalry do more ? ”

“ Happy,” rejoined the Wanderer, “ they who gain  
A panegyric from your generous tongue !  
But, if to these Wayfarers once pertained  
Aught of romantic interest, it is gone.  
Their purer service, in this realm at least,  
Is past for ever.—An inventive Age  
Has wrought, if not with speed of magic, yet  
To most strange issues. I have lived to mark  
A new and unforeseen creation rise  
From out the labours of a peaceful Land  
Wielding her potent enginery to frame  
And to produce, with appetite as keen  
As that of war, which rests not night or day,  
Industrious to destroy ! With fruitless pains  
Might one like me *now* visit many a tract  
Which, in his youth, he trod, and trod again,  
A lone pedestrian with a scanty freight,  
Wished-for, or welcome, wheresoe’er he came—  
Among the tenantry of thorp and vill ;  
Or straggling burgh, of ancient charter proud,  
And dignified by battlements and towers



Of some stern castle, mouldering on the brow  
Of a green hill or bank of rugged stream.  
The foot-path faintly marked, the horse-track wild,  
And formidable length of plashy lane,  
(Prized avenues ere others had been shaped  
Or easier links connecting place with place)  
Have vanished—swallowed up by stately roads  
Easy and bold, that penetrate the gloom  
Of Britain's farthest glens. The Earth has lent  
Her waters, Air her breezes ; and the sail  
Of traffic glides with ceaseless intercourse,  
Glistening along the low and woody dale ;  
Or in its progress, on the lofty side  
Of some bare hill, with wonder kenned from far.

Meanwhile, at social Industry's command,  
How quick, how vast an increase ! From the germ  
Of some poor hamlet, rapidly produced  
Here a huge town, continuous and compact,  
Hiding the face of earth for leagues—and there,  
Where not a habitation stood before,  
Abodes of men irregularly massed  
Like trees in forests,—spread through spacious tracts,  
O'er which the smoke of unremitting fires  
Hangs permanent, and plentiful as wreaths  
Of vapour glittering in the morning sun.  
And, wheresoe'er the traveller turns his steps,  
He sees the barren wilderness erased,  
Or disappearing ; triumph that proclaims

How much the mild Directress of the plough  
Owes to alliance with these new-born arts !  
—Hence is the wide sea peopled,—hence the shores  
Of Britain are resorted to by ships  
Freighted from every climate of the world  
With the world's choicest produce. Hence that sum  
Of keels that rest within her crowded ports,  
Or ride at anchor in her sounds and bays ;  
That animating spectacle of sails  
That, through her inland regions, to and fro  
Pass with the respirations of the tide,  
Perpetual, multitudinous ! Finally,  
Hence a dread arm of floating power, a voice  
Of thunder daunting those who would approach  
With hostile purposes the blessed Isle,  
Truth's consecrated residence, the seat  
Impregnable of Liberty and Peace.

And yet, O happy Pastor of a flock  
Faithfully watched, and, by that loving care  
And Heaven's good providence, preserved from taint !  
With you I grieve, when on the darker side  
Of this great change I look ; and there behold  
Such outrage done to nature as compels  
The indignant power to justify herself ;  
Yea, to avenge her violated rights,  
For England's bane.—When soothing darkness spreads  
O'er hill and vale," the Wanderer thus expressed  
His recollections, "and the punctual stars,

While all things else are gathering to their homes,  
Advance, and in the firmament of heaven  
Glitter—but undisturbing, undisturbed ;  
As if their silent company were charged  
With peaceful admonitions for the heart  
Of all-beholding Man, earth's thoughtful lord ;  
Then, in full many a region, once like this  
The assured domain of calm simplicity  
And pensive quiet, an unnatural light  
Prepared for never-resting labour's eyes,  
Breaks from a many-windowed fabric huge ;  
And at the appointed hour a bell is heard,  
Of harsher import than the curfew-knoll  
That spake the Norman Conqueror's stern behest—  
A local summons to unceasing toil !  
Disgorged are now the ministers of day ;  
And, as they issue from the illumined pile,  
A fresh band meets them, at the crowded door—  
And in the courts—and where the rumbling stream,  
That turns the multitude of dizzy wheels,  
Glares, like a troubled spirit, in its bed  
Among the rocks below. Men, maidens, youths,  
Mother and little children, boys and girls,  
Enter, and each the wonted task resumes  
Within this temple, where is offered up  
To Gain, the master idol of the realm,  
Perpetual sacrifice. Even thus of old  
Our ancestors, within the still domain  
Of vast cathedral or conventual church,

Their vigils kept ; where tapers day and night  
On the dim altar burned continually,  
In token that the House was evermore  
Watching to God. Religious men were they ;  
Nor would their reason, tutored to aspire  
Above this transitory world, allow  
That there should pass a moment of the year,  
When in their land the Almighty's service ceased.

Triumph who will in these profaner rites  
Which we, a generation self-extolled,  
As zealously perform ! I cannot share  
His proud complacency :—yet do I exult,  
Casting reserve away, exult to see  
An intellectual mastery exercised  
O'er the blind elements ; a purpose given,  
A perseverance fed ; almost a soul  
Imparted—to brute matter. I rejoice,  
Measuring the force of those gigantic powers,  
That by the thinking mind have been compelled  
To serve the will of feeble-bodied Man.  
For with the sense of admiration blends  
The animating hope that time may come  
When, strengthened, yet not dazzled, by the might  
Of this dominion over nature gained,  
Men of all lands shall exercise the same  
In due proportion to their country's need ;  
Learning, though late, that all true glory rests,  
All praise, all safety, and all happiness,

Upon the moral law. Egyptian Thebes,  
Tyre, by the margin of the sounding waves,  
Palmyra, central in the desert, fell ;  
And the Arts died by which they had been raised.  
—Call Archimedes from his buried tomb  
Upon the grave of vanished Syracuse,  
And feelingly the Sage shall make report  
How insecure, how baseless in itself,  
Is the Philosophy whose sway depends  
On mere material instruments ;—how weak  
Those arts, and high inventions, if unpropped  
By virtue.—He with sighs of pensive grief,  
Amid his calm abstractions, would admit  
That not the slender privilege is theirs  
To save themselves from blank forgetfulness !”

When from the Wanderer’s lips these words had fallen,  
I said, “ And, did in truth those vaunted Arts  
Possess such privilege, how could we escape  
Sadness and keen regret, we who revere,  
And would preserve as things above all price,  
The old domestic morals of the land,  
Her simple manners, and the stable worth  
That dignified and cheered a low estate ?  
Oh ! where is now the character of peace,  
Sobriety, and order, and chaste love,  
And honest dealing, and untainted speech,  
And pure good-will, and hospitable cheer ;  
That made the very thought of country-life

A thought of refuge, for a mind detained  
Reluctantly amid the bustling crowd ?  
Where now the beauty of the sabbath kept  
With conscientious reverence, as a day  
By the almighty Lawgiver pronounced  
Holy and blest ? and where the winning grace  
Of all the lighter ornaments attached  
To time and season, as the year rolled round ?”

“ Fled !” was the Wanderer’s passionate response,  
“ Fled utterly ! or only to be traced  
In a few fortunate retreats like this ;  
Which I behold with trembling, when I think  
What lamentable change, a year—a month—  
May bring ; that brook converting as it runs  
Into an instrument of deadly bane  
For those, who, yet untempted to forsake  
The simple occupations of their sires,  
Drink the pure water of its innocent stream  
With lip almost as pure.—Domestic bliss  
(Or call it comfort, by a humbler name,)  
How art thou blighted for the poor Man’s heart !  
Lo ! in such neighbourhood, from morn to eve,  
The habitations empty ! or perchance  
The Mother left alone,—no helping hand  
To rock the cradle of her peevish babe ;  
No daughters round her, busy at the wheel,  
Or in dispatch of each day’s little growth  
Of household occupation ; no nice arts

Of needle-work ; no bustle at the fire,  
Where once the dinner was prepared with pride ;  
Nothing to speed the day, or cheer the mind ;  
Nothing to praise, to teach, or to command !

The Father, if perchance he still retain  
His old employments, goes to field or wood,  
No longer led or followed by the Sons ;  
Idlers perchance they were,—but in *his* sight ;  
Breathing fresh air, and treading the green earth ;  
'Till their short holiday of childhood ceased,  
Ne'er to return ! That birthright now is lost.  
Economists will tell you that the State  
Thrives by the forfeiture—unfeeling thought,  
And false as monstrous ! Can the mother thrive  
By the destruction of her innocent sons  
In whom a premature necessity  
Blocks out the forms of nature, preconsumes  
The reason, famishes the heart, shuts up  
The infant Being in itself, and makes  
Its very spring a season of decay !  
The lot is wretched, the condition sad,  
Whether a pining discontent survive,  
And thirst for change ; or habit hath subdued  
The soul deprest, dejected—even to love  
Of her close tasks, and long captivity.

Oh, banish far such wisdom as condemns  
A native Briton to these inward chains,

Fixed in his soul, so early and so deep ;  
Without his own consent, or knowledge, fixed !  
He is a slave to whom release comes not,  
And cannot come. The boy, where'er he turns,  
Is still a prisoner ; when the wind is up  
Among the clouds, and roars through the ancient woods ;  
Or when the sun is shining in the east,  
Quiet and calm. Behold him—in the school  
Of his attainments ? no ; but with the air  
Fanning his temples under heaven's blue arch.  
His raiment, whitened o'er with cotton-flakes  
Or locks of wool, announces whence he comes.  
Creeping his gait and cowering, his lip pale,  
His respiration quick and audible ;  
And scarcely could you fancy that a gleam  
Could break from out those languid eyes, or a blush  
Mantle upon his cheek. Is this the form,  
Is that the countenance, and such the port,  
Of no mean Being ? One who should be clothed  
With dignity befitting his proud hope ;  
Who, in his very childhood, should appear  
Sublime from present purity and joy !  
The limbs increase ; but this organic Frame,  
So gladsome in its motions, is become  
Dull, to the joy of her own motions dead ;  
And even the touch, so exquisitely poured  
Through the whole body, with a languid will  
Performs its functions ; rarely competent  
To impress a vivid feeling on the mind



Of what there is delightful in the breeze,  
The gentle visitations of the sun,  
Or lapse of liquid element—by hand,  
Or foot, or lip, in summer's warmth—perceived.  
—Can hope look forward to a manhood raised  
On such foundations?"

“Hope is none for him!”

The pale Recluse indignantly exclaimed,  
“And tens of thousands suffer wrong as deep.  
Yet be it asked, in justice to our age,  
If there were not, before those arts appeared,  
These structures rose, commingling old and young,  
And unripe sex with sex, for mutual taint;  
If there were not, *then*, in our far-famed Isle,  
Multitudes, who from infancy had breathed  
Air unimprisoned, and had lived at large;  
Yet walked beneath the sun, in human shape,  
As abject, as degraded? At this day,  
Who shall enumerate the crazy huts  
And tottering hovels, whence do issue forth  
A ragged Offspring, with their upright hair  
Crowned like the image of fantastic Fear;  
Or wearing, (shall we say?) in that white growth,  
An ill-adjusted turban, for defence  
Or fierceness, wreathed around their sun-burnt brows,  
By savage Nature? Shrivelled are their lips;  
Naked, and coloured like the soil, the feet  
On which they stand; as if thereby they drew  
Some nourishment, as trees do by their roots,

From earth, the common mother of us all.  
Figure and mien, complexion and attire,  
Are leagued to strike dismay ; but outstretched hand  
And whining voice denote them supplicants  
For the least boon that pity can bestow.  
Such on the breast of darksome heaths are found ;  
And with their parents occupy the skirts  
Of furze-clad commons ; such are born and reared  
At the mine's mouth under impending rocks ;  
Or dwell in chambers of some natural cave ;  
Or where their ancestors erected huts,  
For the convenience of unlawful gain,  
In forest purlicus ; and the like are bred,  
All England through, where nooks and slips of ground  
Purloined, in times less jealous than our own,  
From the green margin of the public way,  
A residence afford them, 'mid the bloom  
And gaiety of cultivated fields.  
Such (we will hope the lowest in the scale)  
Do I remember oft-times to have seen  
'Mid Buxton's dreary heights. In earnest watch,  
Till the swift vehicle approach, they stand ;  
Then, following closely with the cloud of dust,  
An uncouth feat exhibit, and are gone  
Heels over head, like tumblers on a stage.  
—Up from the ground they snatch the copper coin,  
And, on the freight of merry passengers  
Fixing a steady eye, maintain their speed ;  
And spin—and pant—and overhead again,

Wild pursuivants ! until their breath is lost,  
Or bounty tires—and every face, that smiled  
Encouragement, hath ceased to look that way,  
—But, like the vagrants of the gipsy tribe,  
These, bred to little pleasure in themselves,  
Are profitless to others.

Turn we then  
To Britons born and bred within the pale  
Of civil polity, and early trained  
To earn, by wholesome labour in the field,  
The bread they eat. A sample should I give  
Of what this stock hath long produced to enrich  
The tender age of life, ye would exclaim,  
'Is this the whistling plough-boy whose shrill notes  
Impart new gladness to the morning air !'  
Forgive me if I venture to suspect  
That many, sweet to hear of in soft verse,  
Are of no finer frame. Stiff are his joints ;  
Beneath a cumbrous frock, that to the knees  
Invests the thriving churl, his legs appear,  
Fellows to those that lustily upheld  
The wooden stools for everlasting use,  
Whereon our fathers sate. And mark his brow !  
Under whose shaggy canopy are set  
Two eyes—not dim, but of a healthy stare—  
Proclaiming boldly that they never drew  
A look or motion of intelligence  
From infant-conning of the Christ-cross-row,  
Or puzzling through a primer, line by line,

Till perfect mastery crown the pains at last.  
—What kindly warmth from touch of fostering hand,  
What penetrating power of sun or breeze,  
Shall e'er dissolve the crust wherein his soul  
Sleeps, like a caterpillar sheathed in ice ?  
This torpor is no pitiable work  
Of modern ingenuity ; no town  
Nor crowded city can be taxed with aught  
Of sottish vice or desperate breach of law,  
To which (and who can tell where or how soon ?)  
He may be roused. This Boy the fields produce :  
His spade and hoe, mattock and glittering scythe,  
The carter's whip that on his shoulder rests  
In air high-towering with a boorish pomp,  
The sceptre of his sway ; his country's name,  
Her equal rights, her churches and her schools—  
What have they done for him ? And, let me ask,  
For tens of thousands uninformed as he ?  
In brief, what liberty of *mind* is here ? ”

This ardent sally pleased the mild good Man,  
To whom the appeal couched in its closing words  
Was pointedly addressed ; and to the thoughts  
That, in assent or opposition, rose  
Within his mind, he seemed prepared to give  
Prompt utterance ; but the Vicar interposed  
With invitation urgently renewed.  
—We followed, taking as he led, a path  
Along a hedge of hollies dark and tall,

Whose flexile boughs low bending with a weight  
Of leafy spray, concealed the stems and roots  
That gave them nourishment. When frosty winds  
Howl from the north, what kindly warmth, methought,  
Is here—how grateful this impervious screen !  
—Not shaped by simple wearing of the foot  
On rural business passing to and fro  
Was the commodious walk : a careful hand  
Had marked the line, and strewn its surface o'er  
With pure cerulean gravel, from the heights  
Fetched by a neighbouring brook.—Across the vale  
The stately fence accompanied our steps ;  
And thus the pathway, by perennial green  
Guarded and graced, seemed fashioned to unite,  
As by a beautiful yet solemn chain,  
The Pastor's mansion with the house of prayer.

Like image of solemnity, conjoined  
With feminine allurements soft and fair,  
The mansion's self displayed ;—a reverend pile  
With bold projections and recesses deep ;  
Shadowy, yet gay and lightsome as it stood  
Fronting the noontide sun. We paused to admire  
The pillared porch, elaborately embossed ;  
The low wide windows with their mullions old ;  
The cornice richly fretted, of grey stone ;  
And that smooth slope from which the dwelling rose,  
By beds and banks Arcadian of gay flowers  
And flowering shrubs, protected and adorned :

Profusion bright ! and every flower assuming  
A more than natural vividness of hue,  
From unaffected contrast with the gloom  
Of sober cypress, and the darker foil  
Of yew, in which survived some traces, here  
Not unbecoming, of grotesque device  
And uncouth fancy. From behind the roof  
Rose the slim ash and massy sycamore,  
Blending their diverse foliage with the green  
Of ivy, flourishing and thick, that clasped  
The huge round chimneys, harbour of delight  
For wren and redbreast,—where they sit and sing  
Their slender ditties when the trees are bare.  
Nor must I leave untouched (the picture else  
Were incomplete) a relique of old times  
Happily spared, a little Gothic niche  
Of nicest workmanship ; that once had held  
The sculptured image of some patron-saint,  
Or of the blessed Virgin, looking down  
On all who entered those religious doors.

But lo ! where from the rocky garden-mount  
Crowned by its antique summer-house—descends,  
Light as the silver fawn, a radiant Girl ;  
For she hath recognised her honoured friend,  
The Wanderer ever welcome ! A prompt kiss  
The gladsome Child bestows at his request ;  
And, up the flowery lawn as we advance,  
Hangs on the old Man with a happy look,

And with a pretty restless hand of love.  
—We enter—by the Lady of the place  
Cordially greeted. Graceful was her port :  
A lofty stature undepressed by time,  
Whose visitation had not wholly spared  
The finer lineaments of form and face ;  
To that complexion brought which prudence trusts in  
And wisdom loves.—But when a stately ship  
Sails in smooth weather by the placid coast  
On homeward voyage, what—if wind and wave,  
And hardship undergone in various climes,  
Have caused her to abate the virgin pride,  
And that full trim of inexperienced hope  
With which she left her haven—not for this,  
Should the sun strike her, and the impartial breeze  
Play on her streamers, fails she to assume  
Brightness and touching beauty of her own,  
That charm all eyes. So bright, so fair, appeared  
This goodly Matron, shining in the beams  
Of unexpected pleasure.—Soon the board  
Was spread, and we partook a plain repast.

Here, resting in cool shelter, we beguiled  
The mid-day hours with desultory talk ;  
From trivial themes to general argument  
Passing, as accident or fancy led,  
Or courtesy prescribed. While question rose  
And answer flowed, the fetters of reserve  
Dropping from every mind, the Solitary

Resumed the manners of his happier days ;  
And in the various conversation bore  
A willing, nay, at times, a forward part ;  
Yet with the grace of one who in the world  
Had learned the art of pleasing, and had now  
Occasion given him to display his skill,  
Upon the steadfast 'vantage-ground of truth.  
He gazed, with admiration unsuppressed,  
Upon the landscape of the sun-bright vale,  
Seen, from the shady room in which we sate,  
In softened perspective ; and more than once  
Praised the consummate harmony serene  
Of gravity and elegance, diffused  
Around the mansion and its whole domain ;  
Not, doubtless, without help of female taste  
And female care.—“ A blessed lot is yours ! ”  
The words escaped his lip, with a tender sigh  
Breathed over them : but suddenly the door  
Flew open, and a pair of lusty Boys  
Appeared, confusion checking their delight.  
—Not brothers they in feature or attire,  
But fond companions, so I guessed, in field,  
And by the river's margin—whence they come,  
Keen anglers with unusual spoil elated.  
One bears a willow-pannier on his back,  
The boy of plainer garb, whose blush survives  
More deeply tinged. Twin might the other be  
To that fair girl who from the garden-mount  
Bounded :—triumphant entry this for him !



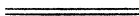
Between his hands he holds a smooth blue stone,  
On whose capacious surface see outspread  
Large store of gleaming crimson-spotted **trouts** ;  
Ranged side by side, and lessening by degrees  
Up to the dwarf that tops the pinnacle.  
Upon the board he lays the sky-blue stone  
With its rich freight ; their number he proclaims ;  
Tells from what pool the noblest had been dragged ;  
And where the very monarch of the brook,  
After long struggle, had escaped at last—  
Stealing alternately at them and us  
(As doth his comrade too) a look of pride :  
And, verily, the silent creatures made  
A splendid sight, together thus exposed ;  
Dead—but not sullied or deformed by death,  
That seemed to pity what he could not spare.

But O, the animation in the mien  
Of those two boys ! yea in the very words  
With which the young narrator was inspired,  
When, as our questions led, he told at large  
Of that day's prowess ! Him might I compare,  
His looks, tones, gestures, eager eloquence,  
To a bold brook that splits for better speed,  
And at the self-same moment, works its way  
Through many channels, ever and anon  
Parted and re-united : his compeer  
To the still lake, whose stillness is to sight  
As beautiful—as grateful to the mind.

—But to what object shall the lovely girl  
Be likened? She whose countenance and air  
Unite the graceful qualities of both,  
Even as she shares the pride and joy of both.

My grey-haired Friend was moved; his vivid eye  
Glistened with tenderness; his mind, I knew,  
Was full; and had, I doubted not, returned,  
Upon this impulse, to the theme—erewhile  
Abruptly broken off. The ruddy boys  
Withdrew, on summons to their well-earned meal;  
And He—to whom all tongues resigned their rights  
With willingness, to whom the general ear  
Listened with readier patience than to strain  
Of music, lute or harp, a long delight  
That ceased not when his voice had ceased—as One  
Who from truth's central point serenely views  
The compass of his argument—began  
Mildly, and with a clear and steady tone.

# THE EXCURSION.



## BOOK IX.

DISCOURSE OF THE WANDERER, &c

## ARGUMENT.

Page 315, Wanderer asserts that an active principle pervades the Universe, its noblest seat the human soul—316, How lively this principle is in childhood—316, Hence the delight in old Age of looking back upon Childhood—316, The dignity, powers, and privileges of Age asserted—318, These not to be looked for generally but under a just government—319, Right of a human Creature to be exempt from being considered as a mere Instrument—320, The condition of multitudes deplored—320, Former conversation recurred to, and the Wanderer's opinions set in a clearer light—322, Truth placed within reach of the humblest—323, Equality—324, Happy state of the two Boys again adverted to—325, Earnest wish expressed for a System of National Education established universally by Government—327, Glorious effects of this foretold—330, Walk to the Lake—335, Grand spectacle from the side of a hill—337, Address of Priest to the Supreme Being—339, in the course of which he contrasts with ancient Barbarism the present appearance of the scene before him—340, The change ascribed to Christianity—340, Apostrophe to his flock, living and dead—341, Gratitude to the Almighty—342, Return over the Lake—342, Parting with the Solitary—342, Under what circumstances.

## BOOK NINTH.

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### DISCOURSE OF THE WANDERER, AND AN EVENING VISIT TO THE LAKE.

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“To every Form of being is assigned,”  
Thus calmly spake the venerable Sage,  
“An *active* Principle :—howe’er removed  
From sense and observation, it subsists  
In all things, in all natures ; in the stars  
Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,  
In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone  
That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,  
The moving waters, and the invisible air.  
Whate’er exists hath properties that spread  
Beyond itself, communicating good,  
A simple blessing, or with evil mixed ;  
Spirit that knows no insulated spot,  
No chasm, no solitude ; from link to link  
It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.  
This is the freedom of the universe ;  
Unfolded still the more, more visible,

The more we know ; and yet is revered least,  
And least respected in the human Mind,  
Its most apparent home. The food of hope  
Is meditated action ; robbed of this  
Her sole support, she languishes and dies.  
We perish also ; for we live by hope  
And by desire ; we see by the glad light  
And breathe the sweet air of futurity ;  
And so we live, or else we have no life.  
To-morrow—nay perchance this very hour  
(For every moment hath its own to-morrow !)  
Those blooming Boys, whose hearts are almost sick  
With present triumph, will be sure to find  
A field before them freshened with the dew  
Of other expectations ;—in which course  
Their happy year spins round. The youth obeys  
A like glad impulse ; and so moves the man  
'Mid all his apprehensions, cares, and fears,—  
Or so he ought to move. Ah ! why in age  
Do we revert so fondly to the walks  
Of childhood—but that there the Soul discerns  
The dear memorial footsteps unimpaired  
Of her own native vigour ; thence can hear  
Reverberations ; and a choral song,  
Commingle with the incense that ascends,  
Undaunted, toward the imperishable heavens,  
From her own lonely altar ?

Do not think  
That good and wise ever will be allowed,

Though strength decay, to breathe in such estate  
 As shall divide them wholly from the stir  
 Of hopeful nature. Rightly is it said  
 That Man descends into the VALE of years ;  
 Yet have I thought that we might also speak,  
 And not presumptuously, I trust, of Age,  
 As of a final EMINENCE ; though bare  
 In aspect and forbidding, yet a point  
 On which 'tis not impossible to sit  
 In awful sovereignty ; a place of power,  
 A throne, that may be likened unto his,  
 Who, in some placid day of summer, looks  
 Down from a mountain-top,—say one of those  
 High peaks, that bound the vale where now we are.  
 Faint, and diminished to the gazing eye,  
 Forest and field, and hill and dale appear,  
 With all the shapes upon their surface spread :  
 But, while the gross and visible frame of things  
 Relinquishes its hold upon the sense,  
 Yea almost on the Mind herself, and seems  
 All unsubstantialized,—how loud the voice  
 Of waters, with invigorated peal  
 From the full river in the vale below,  
 Ascending ! For on that superior height  
 Who sits, is disencumbered from the press  
 Of near obstructions, and is privileged  
 To breathe in solitude above the host  
 Of ever-humming insects, 'mid thin air  
 That suits not them. The murmur of the leaves

Many and idle, visits not his ear :  
This he is freed from, and from thousand notes  
(Not less unceasing, not less vain than these,)  
By which the finer passages of sense  
Are occupied ; and the Soul, that would incline  
To listen, is prevented or deterred.

And may it not be hoped, that, placed by age  
In like removal, tranquil though severe,  
We are not so removed for utter loss ;  
But for some favour, suited to our need ?  
What more than that the severing should confer  
Fresh power to commune with the invisible world,  
And hear the mighty stream of tendency  
Uttering, for elevation of our thought,  
A clear sonorous voice, inaudible  
To the vast multitude ; whose doom it is  
To run the giddy round of vain delight,  
Or fret and labour on the Plain below.

But, if to such sublime ascent the hopes  
Of Man may rise, as to a welcome close  
And termination of his mortal course ;  
Them only can such hope inspire whose minds  
Have not been starved by absolute neglect ;  
Nor bodies crushed by unremitting toil ;  
To whom kind Nature, therefore, may afford  
Proof of the sacred love she bears for all ;  
Whose birthright Reason, therefore, may ensure.



For me, consulting what I feel within  
 In times when most existence with herself  
 Is satisfied, I cannot but believe,  
 That, far as kindly Nature hath free scope  
 And Reason's sway predominates ; even so far,  
 Country, society, and time itself,  
 That saps the individual's bodily frame,  
 And lays the generations low in dust,  
 Do, by the almighty Ruler's grace, partake  
 Of one maternal spirit, bringing forth  
 And cherishing with ever-constant love,  
 That tires not, nor betrays. Our life is turned  
 Out of her course, wherever man is made  
 An offering, or a sacrifice, a tool  
 Or implement, a passive thing employed  
 As a brute mean, without acknowledgment  
 Of common right or interest in the end ;  
 Used or abused, as selfishness may prompt.  
 Say, what can follow for a rational soul  
 Perverted thus, but weakness in all good,  
 And strength in evil ? Hence an after-call  
 For chastisement, and custody, and bonds,  
 And oft-times Death, avenger of the past,  
 And the sole guardian in whose hands we dare  
 Entrust the future.—Not for these sad issues  
 Was Man created ; but to obey the law  
 Of life, and hope, and action. And 'tis known  
 That when we stand upon our native soil,  
 Unelbowed by such objects as oppress

Our active powers, those powers themselves become  
Strong to subvert our noxious qualities :  
They sweep distemper from the busy day,  
And make the chalice of the big round year  
Run o'er with gladness ; whence the Being moves  
In beauty through the world ; and all who see  
Bless him, rejoicing in his neighbourhood."

" Then," said the Solitary, " by what force  
Of language shall a feeling heart express  
Her sorrow for that multitude in whom  
We look for health from seeds that have been sown  
In sickness, and for increase in a power  
That works but by extinction ? On themselves  
They cannot lean, nor turn to their own hearts  
To know what they must do ; their wisdom is  
To look into the eyes of others, thence  
To be instructed what they must avoid :  
Or rather, let us say, how least observed,  
How with most quiet and most silent death,  
With the least taint and injury to the air  
The oppressor breathes, their human form divine,  
And their immortal soul, may waste away."

The Sage rejoined, " I thank you—you have spared  
My voice the utterance of a keen regret,  
A wide compassion which with you I share.  
When, heretofore, I placed before your sight  
A Little-one, subjected to the arts

Of modern ingenuity, and made  
The senseless member of a vast machine,  
Serving as doth a spindle or a wheel ;  
Think not, that, pitying him, I could forget  
The rustic Boy, who walks the fields, untaught ;  
The slave of ignorance, and oft of want,  
And miserable hunger. Much, too much,  
Of this unhappy lot, in early youth  
We both have witnessed, lot which I myself  
Shared, though in mild and merciful degree :  
Yet was the mind to hinderances exposed,  
Through which I struggled, not without distress  
And sometimes injury, like a lamb enthralled  
'Mid thorns and brambles ; or a bird that breaks  
Through a strong net, and mounts upon the wind,  
Though with her plumes impaired. If they, whose souls  
Should open while they range the richer fields  
Of merry England, are obstructed less  
By indigence, their ignorance is not less,  
Nor less to be deplored. For who can doubt  
That tens of thousands at this day exist  
Such as the boy you painted, lineal heirs  
Of those who once were vassals of her soil,  
Following its fortunes like the beasts or trees  
Which it sustained. But no one takes delight  
In this oppression , none are proud of it ;  
It bears no sounding name, nor ever bore ;  
A standing grievance, an indigenous vice  
Of every country under heaven. My thoughts

Were turned to evils that are new and chosen,  
A bondage lurking under shape of good,—  
Arts, in themselves beneficent and kind,  
But all too fondly followed and too far ;—  
To victims, which the merciful can see  
Nor think that they are victims—turned to wrongs  
By women, who have children of their own,  
Beheld without compassion, yea with praise !  
I spake of mischief by the wise diffused  
With gladness, thinking that the more it spreads  
The healthier, the securer, we become ;  
Delusion which a moment may destroy !  
Lastly, I mourned for those whom I had seen  
Corrupted and cast down, on favoured ground,  
Where circumstance and nature had combined  
To shelter innocence, and cherish love ;  
Who, but for this intrusion, would have lived,  
Possessed of health, and strength, and peace of mind ;  
Thus would have lived, or never have been born.

Alas ! what differs more than man from man !  
And whence that difference ? whence but from himself ?  
For see the universal Race endowed  
With the same upright form !—The sun is fixed,  
And the infinite magnificence of heaven  
Fixed, within reach of every human eye ;  
The sleepless ocean murmurs for all ears ;  
The vernal field infuses fresh delight  
Into all hearts. Throughout the world of sense,

Even as an object is sublime or fair,  
 That object is laid open to the view  
 Without reserve or veil ; and as a power  
 Is salutary, or an influence sweet,  
 Are each and all enabled to perceive  
 That power, that influence, by impartial law.  
 Gifts nobler are vouchsafed alike to all ;  
 Reason,—and, with that reason, smiles and tears ;  
 Imagination, freedom in the will ;  
 Conscience to guide and check ; and death to be  
 Foretasted, immortality presumed.  
 Strange, then, nor less than monstrous, might be deemed  
 The failure, if the Almighty, to this point  
 Liberal and undistinguishing, should hide  
 The excellence of moral qualities  
 From common understanding ; leaving truth  
 And virtue, difficult, abstruse, and dark ;  
 Hard to be won, and only by a few ;  
 Strange, should He deal herein with nice respects,  
 And frustrate all the rest ! Believe it not :  
 The primal duties shine aloft—like stars ;  
 The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless,  
 Are scattered at the feet of Man—like flowers.  
 The generous inclination, the just rule,  
 Kind wishes, and good actions, and pure thoughts—  
 No mystery is here ! Here is no boon  
 For high yet not for low ; for proudly graced—  
 Yet not for meek of heart. The smoke ascends  
 To heaven as lightly from the cottage-hearth

As from the haughtiest palace. He, whose soul  
Ponders this true equality, may walk  
The fields of earth with gratitude and hope ;  
Yet, in that meditation, will he find  
Motive to sadder grief, as we have found ;  
Lamenting ancient virtues overthrown,  
And for the injustice grieving, that hath made  
So wide a difference between man and man.

Then let us rather fix our gladdened thoughts  
Upon the brighter scene. How blest that pair  
Of blooming Boys (whom we beheld even now)  
Blest in their several and their common lot !  
A few short hours of each returning day  
The thriving prisoners of their village-school :  
And thence let loose, to seek their pleasant homes  
Or range the grassy lawn in vacancy ;  
To breathe and to be happy, run and shout  
Idle,—but no delay, no harm, no loss ;  
For every genial power of heaven and earth,  
Through all the seasons of the changeful year,  
Obsequiously doth take upon herself  
To labour for them ; bringing each in turn  
The tribute of enjoyment, knowledge, health,  
Beauty, or strength ! Such privilege is theirs,  
Granted alike in the outset of their course  
To both ; and, if that partnership must cease,  
I grieve not,” to the Pastor here he turned,  
“ Much as I glory in that child of yours,

Repine not for his cottage-comrade, whom  
 Belike no higher destiny awaits  
 Than the old hereditary wish fulfilled ;  
 The wish for liberty to live—content  
 With what Heaven grants, and die—in peace of mind,  
 Within the bosom of his native vale.  
 At least, whatever fate the noon of life  
 Reserves for either, sure it is that both  
 Have been permitted to enjoy the dawn ;  
 Whether regarded as a jocund time,  
 That in itself may terminate, or lead  
 In course of nature to a sober eve.  
 Both have been fairly dealt with ; looking back  
 They will allow that justice has in them  
 Been shown, alike to body and to mind.”

He paused, as if revolving in his soul  
 Some weighty matter, then, with fervent voice  
 And an impassioned majesty, exclaimed—

“ O for the coming of that glorious time  
 When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth  
 And best protection, this imperial Realm,  
 While she exacts allegiance, shall admit  
 An obligation, on her part, to *teach*  
 Them who are born to serve her and obey ;  
 Binding herself by statute to secure  
 For all the children whom her soil maintains  
 The rudiments of letters, and inform

The mind with moral and religious truth,  
Both understood and practised,—so that none,  
However destitute, be left to droop  
By timely culture unsustained ; or run  
Into a wild disorder ; or be forced  
To drudge through a weary life without the help  
Of intellectual implements and tools ;  
A savage horde among the civilized,  
A servile band among the lordly free !  
This sacred right, the lisping babe proclaims  
To be inherent in him, by Heaven's will,  
For the protection of his innocence ;  
And the rude boy—who, having overpast  
The sinless age, by conscience is enrolled,  
Yet mutinously knits his angry brow,  
And lifts his wilful hand on mischief bent,  
Or turns the godlike faculty of speech  
To impious use—by process indirect  
Declares his due, while he makes known his need.  
—This sacred right is fruitlessly announced,  
This universal plea in vain addressed,  
To eyes and ears of parents who themselves  
Did, in the time of their necessity,  
Urge it in vain ; and, therefore, like a prayer  
That from the humblest floor ascends to heaven,  
It mounts to reach the State's parental ear ;  
Who, if indeed she own a mother's heart,  
And be not most unfeelingly devoid  
Of gratitude to Providence, will grant



The unquestionable good—which, England, safe  
From interference of external force,  
May grant at leisure ; without risk incurred  
That what in wisdom for herself she doth,  
Others shall e'er be able to undo.

Look ! and behold, from Calpe's sunburnt cliffs  
To the flat margin of the Baltic sea,  
Long-reverenced titles cast away as weeds ;  
Laws overturned ; and territory split,  
Like fields of ice rent by the polar wind,  
And forced to join in less obnoxious shapes  
That, ere they gain consistence, by a gust  
Of the same breath are shattered and destroyed.  
Meantime the sovereignty of these fair Isles  
Remains entire and indivisible :  
And, if that ignorance were removed, which breeds  
Within the compass of their several shores  
Dark discontent, or loud commotion, each  
Might still preserve the beautiful repose  
Of heavenly bodies shining in their spheres.  
—The discipline of slavery is unknown  
Among us,—hence the more do we require  
The discipline of virtue ; order else  
Cannot subsist, nor confidence, nor peace.  
Thus, duties rising out of good possess  
And prudent caution needful to avert  
Impending evil, equally require  
That the whole people should be taught and trained.

So shall licentiousness and black resolve  
Be rooted out, and virtuous habits take  
Their place ; and genuine piety descend  
Like an inheritance, from age to age.

With such foundations laid, avaunt the fear  
Of numbers crowded on their native soil,  
To the prevention of all healthful growth  
Through mutual injury ! Rather in the law  
Of increase and the mandate from above  
Rejoice !—and ye have special cause for joy.  
—For, as the element of air affords  
An easy passage to the industrious bees  
Fraught with their burthens ; and a way as smooth  
For those ordained to take their sounding flight  
From the thronged hive, and settle where they list  
In fresh abodes—their labour to renew ;  
So the wide waters, open to the power,  
The will, the instincts, and appointed needs  
Of Britain, do invite her to cast off  
Her swarms, and in succession send them forth ;  
Bound to establish new communities  
On every shore whose aspect favours hope  
Or bold adventure ; promising to skill  
And perseverance their deserved reward.

Yes,” he continued, kindling as he spake,  
“ Change wide, and deep, and silently performed,  
This Land shall witness ; and as days roll on,

Earth's universal frame shall feel the effect ;  
 Even till the smallest habitable rock,  
 Beaten by lonely billows, hear the songs  
 Of humanized society ; and bloom  
 With civil arts, that send their fragrance forth,  
 A grateful tribute to all-ruling Heaven.  
 From culture, unexclusively bestowed  
 On Albion's noble Race in freedom born,  
 Expect these mighty issues : from the pains  
 And faithful care of unambitious schools  
 Instructing simple childhood's ready ear :  
 Thence look for these magnificent results !  
 —Vast the circumference of hope—and ye  
 Are at its centre, British Lawgivers ;  
 Ah ! sleep not there in shame ! Shall Wisdom's voice  
 From out the bosom of these troubled times  
 Repeat the dictates of her calmer mind,  
 And shall the venerable halls ye fill  
 Refuse to echo the sublime decree ?  
 Trust not to partial care a general good ;  
 Transfer not to futurity a work  
 Of urgent need.—Your Country must complete  
 Her glorious destiny. Begin even now,  
 Now, when oppression, like the Egyptian plague  
 Of darkness, stretched o'er guilty Europe, makes  
 The brightness more conspicuous that invests  
 The happy Island where ye think and act ;  
 Now, when destruction is a prime pursuit,  
 Show to the wretched nations for what end  
 The powers of civil polity were given."

Abruptly here, but with a graceful air,  
The Sage broke off. No sooner had he ceased  
Than, looking forth, the gentle Lady said,  
“Behold the shades of afternoon have fallen  
Upon this flowery slope; and see—beyond—  
The silvery lake is streaked with placid blue;  
As if preparing for the peace of evening.  
How temptingly the landscape shines! The air  
Breathes invitation; easy is the walk  
To the lake’s margin, where a boat lies moored  
Beneath her sheltering tree.”—Upon this hint  
We rose together: all were pleased; but most  
The beauteous girl, whose cheek was flushed with joy.  
Light as a sunbeam glides along the hills  
She vanished—eager to impart the scheme  
To her loved brother and his shy compeer.  
—Now was there bustle in the Vicar’s house  
And earnest preparation.—Forth we went,  
And down the vale along the streamlet’s edge  
Pursued our way, a broken company,  
Mute or conversing, single or in pairs.  
Thus having reached a bridge, that overarched  
The hasty rivulet where it lay becalmed  
In a deep pool, by happy chance we saw  
A two-fold image; on a grassy bank  
A snow-white ram, and in the crystal flood  
Another and the same! Most beautiful,  
On the green turf, with his imperial front  
Shaggy and bold, and wreathèd horns superb,  
The breathing creature stood; as beautiful,

Beneath him, shewed his shadowy counterpart.  
Each had his glowing mountains, each his sky,  
And each seemed centre of his own fair world :  
Antipodes unconscious of each other,  
Yet, in partition, with their several spheres,  
Blended in perfect stillness, to our sight !

“ Ah ! what a pity were it to disperse,  
Or to disturb, so fair a spectacle,  
And yet a breath can do it !”

These few words  
The Lady whispered, while we stood and gazed  
Gathered together, all in still delight,  
Not without awe. Thence passing on, she said  
In like low voice to my particular ear,  
“ I love to hear that eloquent old Man  
Pour forth his meditations, and descant  
On human life from infancy to age.  
How pure his spirit ! in what vivid hues  
His mind gives back the various forms of things,  
Caught in their fairest, happiest, attitude !  
While he is speaking, I have power to see  
Even as he sees ; but when his voice hath ceased,  
Then, with a sigh, sometimes I feel, as now,  
That combinations so serene and bright,  
Like those reflected in yon quiet pool,  
Cannot be lasting in a world whose pleasure  
(And whose best beauty, beautiful as it is)  
Seems but a fleeting sun-beam's gift, whose peace  
The sufferance only of a breath of air !”

More had she said—but sportive shouts were heard  
Sent from the jocund hearts of those two Boys,  
Who, bearing each a basket on his arm,  
Down the green field came tripping after us.  
With caution we embarked ; and now the pair  
For prouder service were address ; but each,  
Wishful to leave an opening for my choice,  
Dropped the light oar his eager hand had seized.  
Thanks given for that becoming courtesy  
Their place I took—and for a grateful office  
Pregnant with recollections of the time  
When, on thy bosom, spacious Windermere !  
A youth, I practised this delightful art ;  
Tossed on the waves alone, or 'mid a crew  
Of joyous comrades. Soon as the reedy marge  
Was cleared, I dipped, with arms accordant, oars  
Free from obstruction ; and the boat advanced  
Through crystal water, smoothly as a hawk,  
That, disentangled from the shady boughs  
Of some thick wood, her place of covert, cleaves  
With correspondent wings the abyss of air.  
—“Observe,” the Vicar said, “yon rocky isle  
With birch-trees fringed ; my hand shall guide the helm,  
While thitherward we shape our course ; or while  
We seek that other, on the western shore ;  
Where the bare columns of those lofty firs,  
Supporting gracefully a massy dome  
Of sombre foliage, seem to imitate  
A Grecian temple rising from the Deep.”

“Turn where we may,” said I, “we cannot err  
In this delicious region.”—Cultured slopes,  
Wild tracts of forest-ground, and scattered groves,  
And mountains bare, or clothed with ancient woods,  
Surrounded us ; and, as we held our way  
Along the level of the glassy flood,  
They ceased not to surround us ; change of place,  
From kindred features diversely combined,  
Producing change of beauty ever new.  
—Ah ! that such beauty, varying in the light  
Of living nature, cannot be portrayed  
By words, nor by the pencil’s silent skill ;  
But is the property of him alone  
Who hath beheld it, noted it with care,  
And in his mind recorded it with love !  
Suffice it, therefore, if the rural Muse  
Vouchsafe sweet influence, while her Poet speaks  
Of trivial occupations well devised,  
And unsought pleasures springing up by chance ;  
As if some friendly Genius had ordained  
That, as the day thus far had been enriched  
By acquisition of sincere delight,  
The same should be continued to its close.

One spirit animating old and young,  
A gipsy-fire we kindled on the shore  
Of the fair Isle with birch-trees fringed—and there,  
Merrily seated in a ring, partook  
A choice repast—served by our young companions

With rival earnestness and kindred glee.  
Launched from our hands the smooth stone skimmed the lake;  
With shouts we raised the echoes ;—stiller sounds  
The lovely Girl supplied—a simple song,  
Whose low tones reached not to the distant rocks  
To be repeated thence, but gently sank  
Into our hearts ; and charmed the peaceful flood.  
Rapaciously we gathered flowery spoils  
From land and water ; lilies of each hue—  
Golden and white, that float upon the waves,  
And court the wind ; and leaves of that shy plant,  
(Her flowers were shed) the lily of the vale,  
That loves the ground, and from the sun withholds  
Her pensive beauty ; from the breeze her sweets.

Such product, and such pastime, did the place  
And season yield ; but, as we re-embarked,  
Leaving, in quest of other scenes, the shore  
Of that wild spot, the Solitary said  
In a low voice, yet careless who might hear,  
“ The fire, that burned so brightly to our wish,  
Where is it now ?—Deserted on the beach—  
Dying, or dead ! Nor shall the fanning breeze  
Revive its ashes. What care we for this,  
Whose ends are gained ? Behold an emblem here  
Of one day’s pleasure, and all mortal joys !  
And, in this unpremeditated slight  
Of that which is no longer needed, see  
The common course of human gratitude ! ”



This plaintive note disturbed not the repose  
 Of the still evening. Right across the lake  
 Our pinnace moves ; then, coasting creek and bay,  
 Glades we behold, and into thickets peep,  
 Where crouch the spotted deer ; or raised our eyes  
 To shaggy steeps on which the careless goat  
 Browsed by the side of dashing waterfalls ;  
 And thus the bark, meandering with the shore,  
 Pursued her voyage, till a natural pier  
 Of jutting rock invited us to land.

Alert to follow as the Pastor led,  
 We clomb a green hill's side ; and, as we clomb,  
 The Valley, opening out her bosom, gave  
 Fair prospect, intercepted less and less,  
 O'er the flat meadows and indented coast  
 Of the smooth lake, in compass seen :—far off, &  
 And yet conspicuous, stood the old Church-tower,  
 In majesty presiding over fields  
 And habitations, seemingly preserved  
 From the intrusion of a restless world  
 By rocks impassable and mountains huge.

Soft heath this elevated spot supplied,  
 And choice of moss-clad stones, whereon we couched  
 Or sate reclined ; admiring quietly  
 The general aspect of the scene ; but each  
 Not seldom over anxious to make known  
 His own discoveries ; or to favourite points

Directing notice, merely from a wish  
To impart a joy, imperfect while unshared.  
That rapturous moment never shall I forget  
When these particular interests were effaced  
From every mind !—Already had the sun,  
Sinking with less than ordinary state,  
Attained his western bound ; but rays of light—  
Now suddenly diverging from the orb  
Retired behind the mountain tops or veiled  
By the dense air—shot upwards to the crown  
Of the blue firmament—aloft, and wide :  
And multitudes of little floating clouds,  
Through their ethereal texture pierced—ere we,  
Who saw, of change were conscious—had become  
Vivid as fire ; clouds separately poised,—  
Innumerable multitude of forms  
Scattered through half the circle of the sky ;  
And giving back, and shedding each on each,  
With prodigal communion, the bright hues  
Which from the unapparent fount of glory  
They had imbibed, and ceased not to receive.  
That which the heavens displayed, the liquid deep  
Repeated ; but with unity sublime !

While from the grassy mountain's open side  
We gazed, in silence hushed, with eyes intent  
On the refulgent spectacle, diffused  
Through earth, sky, water, and all visible space,  
The Priest in holy transport thus exclaimed :

"Eternal Spirit ! universal God !  
 Power inaccessible to human thought,  
 Save by degrees and steps which thou hast deigned  
 To furnish ; for this effluence of thyself,  
 To the infirmity of mortal sense  
 Vouchsafed ; this local transitory type  
 Of thy paternal splendours, and the pomp  
 Of those who fill thy courts in highest heaven,  
 The radiant Cherubim ;—accept the thanks  
 Which we, thy humble Creatures, here convened,  
 Presume to offer ; we, who—from the breast—  
 Of the frail earth, permitted to behold  
 The faint reflections only of thy face—  
 Are yet exalted, and in soul adore !  
 Such as they are who in thy presence stand  
 Unsullied, incorruptible, and drink  
 Imperishable majesty streamed forth  
 From thy empyreal throne, the elect of earth  
 Shall be—divested at the appointed hour  
 Of all dishonour, cleansed from mortal stain.  
 —Accomplish, then, their number ; and conclude  
 Time's weary course ! Or if, by thy decree,  
 The consummation that will come by stealth  
 Be yet far distant, let thy Word prevail,  
 Oh ! let thy Word prevail, to take away  
 The sting of human nature. Spread the law,  
 As it is written in thy holy book,  
 Throughout all lands : let every nation hear  
 The high behest, and every heart obey ;

Both for the love of purity, and hope  
Which it affords, to such as do thy will  
And persevere in good, that they shall rise,  
To have a nearer view of thee, in heaven.  
—Father of good ! this prayer in bounty grant,  
In mercy grant it to thy wretched sons.  
Then, nor till then, shall persecution cease,  
And cruel wars expire. The way is marked,  
The guide appointed, and the ransom paid.  
Alas ! the nations, who of yore received  
These tidings, and in Christian temples meet  
The sacred truth to acknowledge, linger still ;  
Preferring bonds and darkness to a state  
Of holy freedom, by redeeming love  
Proffered to all, while yet on earth detained.

So fare the many ; and the thoughtful few,  
Who in the anguish of their souls bewail  
This dire perverseness, cannot choose but ask,  
Shall it endure ?—Shall enmity and strife,  
Falsehood and guile, be left to sow their seed ;  
And the kind never perish ? Is the hope  
Fallacious, or shall righteousness obtain  
A peaceable dominion, wide as earth,  
And ne'er to fail ? Shall that blest day arrive  
When they, whose choice or lot it is to dwell  
In crowded cities, without fear shall live  
Studious of mutual benefit ; and he,  
Whom Morn awakens, among dews and flowers

Of every clime, to till the lonely field,  
Be happy in himself?—The law of faith  
Working through love, such conquest shall it gain,  
Such triumph over sin and guilt achieve ?  
Almighty Lord, thy further grace impart !  
And with that help the wonder shall be seen  
Fulfilled, the hope accomplished ; and thy praise  
Be sung with transport and unceasing joy.

Once," and with mild demeanour, as he spake,  
On us the venerable Pastor turned  
His beaming eye that had been raised to Heaven,  
" Once, while the Name, Jehovah, was a sound  
Within the circuit of this sea-girt isle  
Unheard, the savage nations bowed the head  
To Gods delighting in remorseless deeds ;  
Gods which themselves had fashioned, to promote  
Ill purposes, and flatter foul desires.  
Then, in the bosom of yon mountain-cove,  
To those inventions of corrupted man  
Mysterious rites were solemnized ; and there—  
Amid impending rocks and gloomy woods,—  
Of those terrific Idols some received  
Such dismal service, that the loudest voice  
Of the swoln cataracts (which now are heard  
Soft murmuring) was too weak to overcome,  
Though aided by wild winds, the groans and shrieks  
Of human victims, offered up to appease  
Or to propitiate. And, if living eyes

Had visionary faculties to see  
The thing that hath been as the thing that is,  
Aghast we might behold this crystal Mere  
Bedimmed with smoke, in wreaths voluminous,  
Flung from the body of devouring fires,  
To Taranis erected on the heights  
By priestly hands, for sacrifice performed  
Exultingly, in view of open day  
And full assemblage of a barbarous host ;  
Or to Andates, female Power ! who gave  
(For so they fancied) glorious victory.  
—A few rude monuments of mountain-stone  
Survive ; all else is swept away.—How bright  
The appearances of things ! From such, how changed  
The existing worship ; and with those compared,  
The worshippers how innocent and blest !  
So wide the difference, a willing mind  
Might almost think, at this affecting hour,  
That paradise, the lost abode of man,  
Was raised again : and to a happy few,  
In its original beauty, here restored.

Whence but from thee, the true and only God,  
And from the faith derived through Him who bled  
Upon the cross, this marvellous advance  
Of good from evil ; as if one extreme  
Were left, the other gained.—O ye, who come  
To kneel devoutly in yon reverend Pile,  
Called to such office by the peaceful sound

Of sabbath bells ; and ye, who sleep in earth,  
 All cares forgotten, round its hallowed walls !  
 For you, in presence of this little band  
 Gathered together on the green hill-side,  
 Your Pastor is emboldened to prefer  
 Vocal thanksgivings to the eternal King ;  
 Whose love, whose counsel, whose commands, have made  
 Your very poorest rich in peace of thought  
 And in good works ; and him, who is endowed  
 With scantiest knowledge, master of all truth  
 Which the salvation of his soul requires.  
 Conscious of that abundant favour showered  
 On you, the children of my humble care,  
 And this dear land, our country, while on earth  
 We sojourn, have I lifted up my soul,  
 Joy giving voice to fervent gratitude.  
 These barren rocks, your stern inheritance ;  
 These fertile fields, that recompense your pains ;  
 The shadowy vale, the sunny mountain-top ;  
 Woods waving in the wind their lofty heads,  
 Or hushed ; the roaring waters, and the still—  
 They see the offering of my lifted hands,  
 They hear my lips present their sacrifice,  
 They know if I be silent, morn or even :  
 For, though in whispers speaking, the full heart  
 Will find a vent ; and thought is praise to him,  
 Audible praise, to thee, omniscient Mind,  
 From whom all gifts descend, all blessings flow !”

This vesper-service closed, without delay,  
From that exalted station to the plain  
Descending, we pursued our homeward course,  
In mute composure, o'er the shadowy lake,  
Under a faded sky. No trace remained  
Of those celestial splendours ; grey the vault—  
Pure, cloudless, ether ; and the star of eve  
Was wanting ; but inferior lights appeared  
Faintly, too faint almost for sight ; and some  
Above the darkened hills stood boldly forth  
In twinkling lustre, ere the boat attained  
Her mooring-place ; where, to the sheltering tree  
Our youthful Voyagers bound fast her prow,  
With prompt yet careful hands. This done, we paced  
The dewy fields ; but ere the Vicar's door  
Was reached, the Solitary checked his steps ;  
Then, intermingling thanks, on each bestowed  
A farewell salutation ; and, the like  
Receiving, took the slender path that leads  
To the one cottage in the lonely dell :  
But turned not without welcome promise given  
That he would share the pleasures and pursuits  
Of yet another summer's day, consumed  
In wandering with us through the valleys fair,  
And o'er the mountain-wastes. “ Another sun,”  
Said he, “ shall shine upon us, ere we part ;  
Another sun, and peradventure more ;  
If time, with free consent, is yours to give,  
And season favours.”



To enfeebled Power,  
From this communion with uninjured Minds,  
What renovation had been brought ; and what  
Degree of healing to a wounded spirit,  
Dejected, and habitually disposed  
To seek, in degradation of the Kind,  
Excuse and solace for her own defects ;  
How far those erring notions were reformed ;  
And whether aught, of tendency as good  
And pure, from further intercourse ensued ;  
This—(if delightful hopes, as heretofore,  
Inspire the serious song, and gentle Hearts  
Cherish, and lofty Minds approve the past)  
My future labours may not leave untold.

END OF THE NINTH BOOK.



## NOTES.

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PREFACE. Page 9. Line 3.

*“ Descend, prophetic Spirit, that inspirest  
The human soul,” &c.*

Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic Soul  
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come.

*Shakspeare's Sonnets.*

Page 26. Line 14.

“ ——— *much did he see of Men.*”

At the risk of giving a shock to the prejudices of artificial society, I have ever been ready to pay homage to the aristocracy of nature ; under a conviction that vigorous human-heartedness is the constituent principle of true taste. It may still, however, be satisfactory to have prose-testimony how far a Character, employed for purposes of imagination, is founded upon general fact. I, therefore, subjoin an extract from an author who had opportunities of being well acquainted with a class of men, from whom my own personal knowledge emboldened me to draw this portrait.

“ We learn from Cæsar and other Roman Writers, that the travelling merchants who frequented Gaul and other barbarous countries, either newly conquered by the Roman arms, or bordering on the Roman conquests, were ever the first to make the inha-

bitants of those countries familiarly acquainted with the Roman modes of life, and to inspire them with an inclination to follow the Roman fashions, and to enjoy Roman conveniences. In North America, travelling merchants from the Settlements have done and continue to do much more towards civilizing the Indian natives, than all the missionaries, papist or protestant, who have ever been sent among them.

It is farther to be observed, for the credit of this most useful class of men, that they commonly contribute, by their personal manners, no less than by the sale of their wares, to the refinement of the people among whom they travel. Their dealings form them to great quickness of wit and acuteness of judgment. Having constant occasion to recommend themselves and their goods, they acquire habits of the most obliging attention, and the most insinuating address. As in their peregrinations they have opportunity of contemplating the manners of various men and various cities, they become eminently skilled in the knowledge of the world. *As they wander, each alone, through thinly-inhabited districts, they form habits of reflection and of sublime contemplation.* With all these qualifications, no wonder, that they should often be, in remote parts of the country, the best mirrors of fashion, and censors of manners, and should contribute much to polish the roughness, and soften the rusticity of our peasantry. It is not more than twenty or thirty years, since a young man going from any part of Scotland to England, of purpose to *carry the pack*, was considered, as going to lead the life, and acquire the fortune, of a gentleman. When, after twenty years' absence, in that honourable line of employment, he returned with his acquisitions to his native country, he was regarded as a gentleman to all intents and purposes."

*Heron's Journey in Scotland*, Vol. 1. p. 89.

Page 81. Line 10.

" *Lost in unsearchable Eternity !* "

Since this paragraph was composed, I have read with so much

pleasure, in Burnet's Theory of the Earth, a passage expressing correspondent sentiments, excited by objects of a similar nature, that I cannot forbear to transcribe it.

“Siquid verò Natura nobis dedit spectaculum, in hâc tellure, verè gratum, et philosopho dignum, id semel mihi contigisse arbitror; cùm ex celsissimâ rupe speculabundus ad oram maris Mediterranei, hinc æquor cæruleum, illinc tractus Alpinos prospexi; nihil quidem magis dispar aut dissimile, nec in suo genere, magis egregium et singulare. Hoc theatrum ego facilè prætulërim Romanis cunctis, Græcisve; atque id quod natura hîc spectandum exhibet, scenicis ludis omnibus, aut amphitheatri cætaminihus. Nihil hîc elegans aut venustum, sed ingens et magnificum, et quod placet magnitudine suâ et quâdam specie immensitatis. Hinc intuebar maris æquabilem superficiem, usque et usque diffusam, quantum maximum oculorum acies ferri potuit; illuc disruptissimam terræ faciem, et vastas moles variè elevatas aut depressas, erectas, propendentes, reclinatas, coacervatas, omni situ inæquali et turbido. Placuit, ex hâc parte, Naturæ unitas et simplicitas, et inexhausta quædam planities; ex alterâ, multiformis confusio magnorum corporum, et insanæ rerum strages: quas cùm intuebar, non urbis alicujus aut oppidi, sed confracti mundi rudera, ante oculos habere mihi visus sum.

In singulis ferè montibus erat aliquid insolens et mirabile, sed præ cæteris mihi placebat illa, quâ sedebam, rupes; erat maxima et altissima, et quâ terram respiciebat, molliori ascensu altitudinem suam dissimulabat: quâ verò mare, horrendum præceps, et quasi ad perpendiculum facta, instar parietis. Prætercâ facies illa marina adèd erat lævis ac uniformis (quod in rupibus aliquando observare licet) ac si scissa fuisset à summo ad imum, in illo plano; vel terræ motu aliquo, aut fulmine, divulsa.

Ima pars rupis erat cava, recessusque habuit, et saxeos specus, euntes in vacuum montem; sive naturâ pridem factos, sive exesos mari, et undarum crebris ictibus: In hos enim cum impetu ruebant et fragore, æstuantis maris fluctus; quos iterum spumantes reddidit antrum, et quasi ab imo ventre evomuit.

Dextrum latus montis erat præruptum, aspero saxo et nudâ

caute ; sinistrum non adeò neglexerat Natura, arboribus utpote ornatum : et prope pedem montis rivus limpidæ aquæ prorupit ; qui cùm vicinam vallem irrigaverat, lento motu serpens, et per varios mæandros, quasi ad protrahendam vitam, in magno mari absorptus subito perit. Denique in summo vertice promontorii, commodè eminebat saxum, cui insidebam contemplabundus. Vale augusta sedes, Rege digna : Augusta rupes, semper mihi memoranda !" P. 89. *Telluris Theoria sacra, &c. Editio secunda.*

Page 110. Line 16.

" *Of Mississippi, or that Northern Stream.*"

" A man is supposed to improve by going out into the *World*, by visiting *London*. Artificial man does ; he extends with his sphere ; but, alas ! that sphere is microscopic ; it is formed of minutia, and he surrenders his genuine vision to the artist, in order to embrace it in his ken. His bodily senses grow acute, even to barren and inhuman pruriency ; while his mental become proportionally obtuse. The reverse is the Man of Mind : he who is placed in the sphere of Nature and of God, might be a mock at Tattersall's and Brookes's, and a sneer at St. James's : he would certainly be swallowed alive by the first *Pizarro* that crossed him :—But when he walks along the river of Amazons ; when he rests his eye on the unrivalled Andes ; when he measures the long and watered savannah ; or contemplates, from a sudden promontory, the distant, vast Pacific—and feels himself a freeman in this vast theatre, and commanding each ready produced fruit of this wilderness, and each progeny of this stream—his exaltation is not less than imperial. He is as gentle, too, as he is great : his emotions of tenderness keep pace with his elevation of sentiment ; for he says, ' These were made by a good Being, who, unsought by me, placed me here to enjoy them.' He becomes at once a child and a king. His mind is in himself ; from hence he argues, and from hence he acts, and he argues unerringly, and acts magisterially : his mind in himself is also in his God ; and therefore he loves, and therefore he soars."—From the notes upon *The Hurricane*, a Poem, by *William Gilbert*.

The Reader, I am sure, will thank me for the above quotation, which, though from a strange book, is one of the finest passages of modern English prose.

Page 120. First Line.

*“ ’Tis, by comparison, an easy task  
Earth to despise,” &c.*

See, upon this subject, Baxter’s most interesting review of his own opinions and sentiments in the decline of life. It may be found (lately reprinted) in Dr. Wordsworth’s *Ecclesiastical Biography*.

Page 122. Line 18.

*“ Alas ! the endowment of immortal Power,  
Is matched unequally with custom, time,” &c.*

This subject is treated at length in the Ode at the conclusion of the fifth volume.

Page 126. Line 25.

*“ Knowing the heart of Man is set to be,” &c.*

The passage quoted from Daniel is taken from a poem addressed to the Lady Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, and the two last lines, printed in Italics, are by him translated from Seneca. The whole Poem is very beautiful. I will transcribe four stanzas from it, as they contain an admirable picture of the state of a wise Man’s mind in a time of public commotion.

Nor is he moved with all the thunder-cracks  
Of tyrant’s threats, or with the surly brow  
Of Power, that proudly sits on others’ crimes ;  
Charged with more crying sins than those he checks.  
The storms of sad confusion that may grow  
Up in the present for the coming times,  
Appal not him ; that hath no side at all,  
But of himself, and knows the worst can fall.

Although his heart (so near allied to earth)  
 Cannot but pity the perplexed state  
 Of troublous and distressed mortality,  
 That thus make way unto the ugly birth  
 Of their own sorrows, and do still beget  
 Affliction upon Imbecility :  
 Yet seeing thus the course of things must run,  
 He looks thereon not strange, but as fore-done.

And whilst distraught ambition compasses,  
 And is encompassed, while as craft deceives,  
 And is deceived : whilst man doth ransack man,  
 And builds on blood, and rises by distress ;  
 And th' Inheritance of desolation leaves  
 To great-expecting hopes : He looks thereon,  
 As from the shore of peace, with unwet eye,  
 And bears no venture in Impiety.

Thus, Lady, fares that man that hath prepared  
 A rest for his desires ; and sees all things  
 Beneath him ; and hath learned this book of man,  
 Full of the notes of frailty ; and compared  
 The best of glory with her sufferings :  
 By whom, I see, you labour all you can  
 To plant your heart ! and set your thoughts as near  
 His glorious mansion as your powers can bear.

Page 188. Line 15.

*“ Or rather, as we stand on holy earth  
 And have the dead around us.”*

*Leo.* You, Sir, would help me to the history  
 Of half these graves ?

*Priest.* For eight-score winters past,  
 With what I've witnessed, and with what I've heard,  
 Perhaps I might ; — — — — —



By turning o'er these hillocks one by one,  
We two could travel, Sir, through a strange round ;  
Yet all in the broad highway of the world.

*See The Brothers, Vol. I.*

P. 200. Line 2.

*" And suffering Nature grieved that one should die."*

*Southey's Retrospect.*

P. 200. Line 5.

*" And whence that tribute ? wherefore these regards ? "*

The sentiments and opinions here uttered are in unison with those expressed in the following Essay upon Epitaphs, which was furnished by the author for Mr. Coleridge's periodical work, the *Friend* ; and as they are dictated by a spirit congenial to that which pervades this and the two succeeding books, the sympathising reader will not be displeased to see the Essay here annexed.

## ESSAY UPON EPITAPHS.



It needs scarcely be said, that an Epitaph presupposes a Monument, upon which it is to be engraven. Almost all Nations have wished that certain external signs should point out the places where their dead are interred. Among savage tribes unacquainted with letters this has mostly been done either by rude stones placed near the graves, or by mounds of earth raised over them. This custom proceeded obviously from a twofold desire ; first, to guard the remains of the deceased from irreverent approach or from savage violation : and, secondly, to preserve their memory. “ Never any,” says Camden, “ neglected burial but some savage nations ; as the Bactrians, which cast their dead to the dogs ; some varlet philosophers, as Diogenes, who desired to be devoured of fishes ; some dissolute courtiers, as Mæcenas, who was wont to say, *Non tumulum curo ; sepelit natura relictos.*

I'm careless of a grave :—Nature her dead will save.”

As soon as nations had learned the use of letters, epitaphs were inscribed upon these monuments ; in order that their intention might be more surely and adequately fulfilled. I have derived monuments and

epitaphs from two sources of feeling : but these do in fact resolve themselves into one. The invention of epitaphs, Weever, in his *Discourse of Funeral Monuments*, says rightly, ‘proceeded from the presage or fore-feeling of immortality, implanted in all men naturally, and is referred to the scholars of Linus the Theban poet, who flourished about the year of the world two thousand seven hundred ; who first bewailed this Linus their Master, when he was slain, in doleful verses, then called of him *Ælina*, afterwards *Epitaphia*, for that they were first sung at burials, after engraved upon the sepulchres.’

And, verily, without the consciousness of a principle of immortality in the human soul, Man could never have had awakened in him the desire to live in the remembrance of his fellows : mere love, or the yearning of kind towards kind, could not have produced it. The dog or horse perishes in the field, or in the stall, by the side of his companions, and is incapable of anticipating the sorrow with which his surrounding associates shall bemoan his death, or pine for his loss ; he cannot pre-conceive this regret, he can form no thought of it ; and therefore cannot possibly have a desire to leave such regret or remembrance behind him. Add to the principle of love which exists in the inferior animals, the faculty of reason which exists in Man alone ; will the conjunction of these account for the desire ? Doubtless it is a necessary consequence of this conjunction ; yet not I think as a direct result, but only to be come at through an intermediate thought, viz. that of an intimation or assurance within us, that some part of our

nature is imperishable. At least the precedence, in order of birth, of one feeling to the other, is unquestionable. If we look back upon the days of childhood, we shall find that the time is not in remembrance when, with respect to our own individual Being, the mind was without this assurance ; whereas, the wish to be remembered by our friends or kindred after death, or even in absence, is, as we shall discover, a sensation that does not form itself till the *social* feelings have been developed, and the Reason has connected itself with a wide range of objects. Forlorn, and cut off from communication with the best part of his nature, must that man be, who should derive the sense of immortality, as it exists in the mind of a child, from the same unthinking gaiety or liveliness of animal spirits with which the lamb in the meadow, or any other irrational creature is endowed ; who should ascribe it, in short, to blank ignorance in the child ; to an inability arising from the imperfect state of his faculties to come, in any point of his being, into contact with a notion of death ; or to an unreflecting acquiescence in what had been instilled into him ! Has such an unfold of the mysteries of nature, though he may have forgotten his former self, ever noticed the early, obstinate, and unappeasable inquisitiveness of children upon the subject of origination ? This single fact proves outwardly the monstrousness of those suppositions : for, if we had no direct external testimony that the minds of very young children meditate feelingly upon death and immortality, these inquiries, which we all know they are perpetually making concerning the *whence*, do necessarily include correspondent habits of interrogation concerning the

*whither*. Origin and tendency are notions inseparably co-relative. Never did a child stand by the side of a running stream, pondering within himself what power was the feeder of the perpetual current, from what never-wearied sources the body of water was supplied, but he must have been inevitably propelled to follow this question by another: "Towards what abyss is it in progress? what receptacle can contain the mighty influx?" And the spirit of the answer must have been, though the word might be sea or ocean, accompanied perhaps with an image gathered from a map, or from the real object in nature—these might have been the *letter*, but the *spirit* of the answer must have been *as* inevitably,—a receptacle without bounds or dimensions;—nothing less than infinity. We may, then, be justified in asserting, that the sense of immortality, if not a co-existent and twin birth with Reason, is among the earliest of her offspring: and we may further assert, that from these conjoined, and under their countenance, the human affections are gradually formed and opened out. This is not the place to enter into the recesses of these investigations; but the subject requires me here to make a plain avowal, that, for my own part, it is to me inconceivable, that the sympathies of love towards each other, which grow with our growth, could ever attain any new strength, or even preserve the old, after we had received from the outward senses the impression of death, and were in the habit of having that impression daily renewed and its accompanying feeling brought home to ourselves, and to those we love; if the same were not counteracted by those communications with

our internal Being, which are anterior to all these experiences, and with which revelation coincides, and has through that coincidence alone (for otherwise it could not possess it) a power to affect us. I confess, with me the conviction is absolute, that, if the impression and sense of death were not thus counterbalanced, such a hollowness would pervade the whole system of things, such a want of correspondence and consistency, a disproportion so astounding betwixt means and ends, that there could be no repose, no joy. Were we to grow up unfostered by this genial warmth, a frost would chill the spirit, so penetrating and powerful, that there could be no motions of the life of love; and infinitely less could we have any wish to be remembered after we had passed away from a world in which each man had moved about like a shadow.—If, then, in a creature endowed with the faculties of foresight and reason, the social affections could not have unfolded themselves uncountenanced by the faith that Man is an immortal being; and if, consequently, neither could the individual dying have had a desire to survive in the remembrance of his fellows, nor on their side could they have felt a wish to preserve for future times vestiges of the departed; it follows, as a final inference, that without the belief in immortality, wherein these several desires originate, neither monuments nor epitaphs, in affectionate or laudatory commemoration of the deceased, could have existed in the world.

Simonides, it is related, upon landing in a strange country, found the corse of an unknown person lying by the sea-side; he buried it, and was honoured through-

out Greece for the piety of that act. Another ancient Philosopher, chancing to fix his eyes upon a dead body, regarded the same with slight, if not with contempt; saying, "See the shell of the flown bird!" But it is not to be supposed that the moral and tender-hearted Simonides was incapable of the lofty movements of thought, to which that other Sage gave way at the moment while his soul was intent only upon the indestructible being; nor, on the other hand, that he, in whose sight a lifeless human body was of no more value than the worthless shell from which the living fowl had departed, would not, in a different mood of mind, have been affected by those earthly considerations which had incited the philosophic Poet to the performance of that pious duty. And with regard to this latter we may be assured that, if he had been destitute of the capability of communing with the more exalted thoughts that appertain to human nature, he would have cared no more for the corse of the stranger than for the dead body of a seal or porpoise which might have been cast up by the waves. We respect the corporeal frame of Man, not merely because it is the habitation of a rational, but of an immortal Soul. Each of these Sages was in sympathy with the best feelings of our nature; feelings which, though they seem opposite to each other, have another and a finer connection than that of contrast.—It is a connection formed through the subtle progress by which, both in the natural and the moral world, qualities pass insensibly into their contraries, and things revolve upon each other. As, in sailing upon the orb of this planet, a voyage towards the regions where the sun sets, conducts

gradually to the quarter where we have been accustomed to behold it come forth at its rising ; and, in like manner, a voyage towards the east, the birth-place in our imagination of the morning, leads finally to the quarter where the sun is last seen when he departs from our eyes ; so the contemplative Soul, travelling in the direction of mortality, advances to the country of everlasting life ; and, in like manner, may she continue to explore those cheerful tracts, till she is brought back, for her advantage and benefit, to the land of transitory things—of sorrow and of tears.

On a midway point, therefore, which commands the thoughts and feelings of the two Sages whom we have represented in contrast, does the Author of that species of composition, the laws of which it is our present purpose to explain, take his stand. Accordingly, recurring to the twofold desire of guarding the remains of the deceased and preserving their memory, it may be said that a sepulchral monument is a tribute to a man as a human being ; and that an epitaph (in the ordinary meaning attached to the word) includes this general feeling and something more ; and is a record to preserve the memory of the dead, as a tribute due to his individual worth, for a satisfaction to the sorrowing hearts of the survivors, and for the common benefit of the living : which record is to be accomplished, not in a general manner, but, where it can, in *close connection with the bodily remains of the deceased* : and these, it may be added, among the modern nations of Europe, are deposited within, or contiguous to, their places of worship. In ancient times, as is well known, it was



the custom to bury the dead beyond the walls of towns and cities; and among the Greeks and Romans they were frequently interred by the way-sides.

I could here pause with pleasure, and invite the Reader to indulge with me in contemplation of the advantages which must have attended such a practice. We might ruminate upon the beauty which the monuments, thus placed, must have borrowed from the surrounding images of nature—from the trees, the wild flowers, from a stream running perhaps within sight or hearing, from the beaten road stretching its weary length hard by. Many tender similitudes must these objects have presented to the mind of the traveller leaning upon one of the tombs, or reposing in the coolness of its shade, whether he had halted from weariness or in compliance with the invitation, ‘Pause, Traveller!’ so often found upon the monuments. And to its epitaph also must have been supplied strong appeals to visible appearances or immediate impressions, lively and affecting analogies of life as a journey—death as a sleep overcoming the tired wayfarer—of misfortune as a storm that falls suddenly upon him—of beauty as a flower that passeth away, or of innocent pleasure as one that may be gathered—of virtue that standeth firm as a rock against the beating waves;—of hope ‘undermined insensibly like the poplar by the side of the river that has fed it,’ or blasted in a moment like a pine-tree by the stroke of lightning upon the mountain-top—of admonitions and heart-stirring remembrances, like a refreshing breeze that comes without warning, or the taste of the waters of an unexpected

fountain. These, and similar suggestions, must have given, formerly, to the language of the senseless stone a voice enforced and endeared by the benignity of that nature with which it was in unison.—We, in modern times, have lost much of these advantages; and they are but in a small degree counterbalanced to the inhabitants of large towns and cities, by the custom of depositing the dead within, or contiguous to, their places of worship; however splendid or imposing may be the appearance of those edifices, or however interesting or salutary the recollections associated with them. Even were it not true that tombs lose their monitory virtue when thus obtruded upon the notice of men occupied with the cares of the world, and too often sullied and defiled by those cares, yet still, when death is in our thoughts, nothing can make amends for the want of the soothing influences of nature, and for the absence of those types of renovation and decay, which the fields and woods offer to the notice of the serious and contemplative mind. To feel the force of this sentiment, let a man only compare in imagination the unsightly manner in which our monuments are crowded together in the busy, noisy, unclean, and almost grassless church-yard of a large town, with the still seclusion of a Turkish cemetery, in some remote place; and yet further sanctified by the grove of cypress in which it is embosomed. Thoughts in the same temper as these have already been expressed with true sensibility by an ingenuous Poet of the present day. The subject of his poem is “All Saints Church, Derby:” he has been deploring the forbidding and unseemly appearance

of its burial-ground, and uttering a wish, that in past times the practice had been adopted of interring the inhabitants of large towns in the country.—

‘ Then in some rural, calm, sequestered spot,  
Where healing Nature her benignant look  
Ne’er changes, save at that lorn season, when,  
With tresses drooping o’er her sable stole,  
She yearly mourns the mortal doom of man,  
Her noblest work, (so Israel’s virgins erst,  
With annual moan upon the mountains wept  
Their fairest gone,) there in that rural scene,  
So placid, so congenial to the wish  
The Christian feels, of peaceful rest within  
The silent grave, I would have stayed :

\* \* \* \*

—wandered forth, where the cold dew of heaven  
Lay on the humbler graves around, what time  
The pale moon gazed upon the turfy mounds,  
Pensive, as though like me, in lonely muse,  
’Twere brooding on the dead inhumed beneath.  
There while with him, the holy man of Uz,  
O’er human destiny I sympathised,  
Counting the long, long periods prophecy  
Decrees to roll, ere the great day arrives  
Of resurrection, oft the blue-eyed Spring  
Had met me with her blossoms, as the Dove,  
Of old, returned with olive leaf, to cheer  
The Patriarch mourning o’er a world destroyed :  
And I would bless her visit ; for to me  
’Tis sweet to trace the consonance that links  
As one, the works of Nature and the word  
Of God.’——]

JOHN EDWARDS.

A village church-yard, lying as it does in the lap of nature, may indeed be most favourably contrasted with that of a town of crowded population ; and sepulture therein combines many of the best tendencies which belong to the mode practised by the Ancients, with others peculiar to itself. The sensations of pious cheerfulness, which attend the celebration of the sabbath-day in rural places, are profitably chastised by the sight of the graves of kindred and friends, gathered together in that general home towards which the thoughtful yet happy spectators themselves are journeying. Hence a parish-church, in the stillness of the country, is a visible centre of a community of the living and the dead ; a point to which are habitually referred the nearest concerns of both.

As, then, both in cities and in villages, the dead are deposited in close connection with our places of worship, with us the composition of an epitaph naturally turns, still more than among the nations of antiquity, upon the most serious and solemn affections of the human mind ; upon departed worth—upon personal or social sorrow and admiration—upon religion, individual and social—upon time, and upon eternity. Accordingly, it suffices, in ordinary cases, to secure a composition of this kind from censure, that it contain nothing that shall shock or be inconsistent with this spirit. But, to entitle an epitaph to praise, more than this is necessary. It ought to contain some thought or feeling belonging to the mortal or immortal part of our nature touchingly expressed ; and if that be done, however general or even trite the sentiment may be, every man of pure mind will

read the words with pleasure and gratitude. A husband bewails a wife ; a parent breathes a sigh of disappointed hope over a lost child ; a son utters a sentiment of filial reverence for a departed father or mother ; a friend perhaps inscribes an encomium recording the companionable qualities, or the solid virtues, of the tenant of the grave, whose departure has left a sadness upon his memory. This and a pious admonition to the living, and a humble expression of Christian confidence in immortality, is the language of a thousand churchyards ; and it does not often happen that any thing, in a greater degree discriminate or appropriate to the dead or to the living, is to be found in them. This want of discrimination has been ascribed by Dr. Johnson, in his *Essay upon the epitaphs of Pope*, to two causes ; first, the scantiness of the objects of human praise ; and, secondly, the want of variety in the characters of men ; or, to use his own words, ‘ to the fact, that the greater part of mankind have no character at all.’ Such language may be holden without blame among the generalities of common conversation ; but does not become a critic and a moralist speaking seriously upon a serious subject. The objects of admiration in human-nature are not scanty, but abundant : and every man has a character of his own, to the eye that has skill to perceive it. The real cause of the acknowledged want of discrimination in sepulchral memorials is this : That to analyse the characters of others, especially of those whom we love, is not a common or natural employment of men at any time. We are not anxious unerringly to understand the constitution of the minds of those who have soothed,

who have cheered, who have supported us : with whom we have been long and daily pleased or delighted. The affections are their own justification. The light of love in our hearts is a satisfactory evidence that there is a body of worth in the minds of our friends or kindred, whence that light has proceeded. We shrink from the thought of placing their merits and defects to be weighed against each other in the nice balance of pure intellect ; nor do we find much temptation to detect the shades by which a good quality or virtue is discriminated in them from an excellence known by the same general name as it exists in the mind of another ; and, least of all, do we incline to these refinements when under the pressure of sorrow, admiration, or regret, or when actuated by any of those feelings which incite men to prolong the memory of their friends and kindred, by records placed in the bosom of the all-uniting and equalising receptacle of the dead.

The first requisite, then, in an Epitaph is, that it should speak, in a tone which shall sink into the heart, the general language of humanity as connected with the subject of death—the source from which an epitaph proceeds—of death, and of life. To be born and to die are the two points in which all men feel themselves to be in absolute coincidence. This general language may be uttered so strikingly as to entitle an epitaph to high praise ; yet it cannot lay claim to the highest unless other excellencies be superadded. Passing through all intermediate steps, we will attempt to determine at once what these excellencies are, and wherein consists the perfection of this species of composition.—It will be

found to lie in a due proportion of the common or universal feeling of humanity to sensations excited by a distinct and clear conception, conveyed to the reader's mind, of the individual, whose death is deplored and whose memory is to be preserved ; at least of his character as, after death, it appeared to those who loved him and lament his loss. The general sympathy ought to be quickened, provoked, and diversified, by particular thoughts, actions, images,—circumstances of age, occupation, manner of life, prosperity which the deceased had known, or adversity to which he had been subject ; and these ought to be bound together and solemnised into one harmony by the general sympathy. The two powers should temper, restrain, and exalt each other. The reader ought to know who and what the man was whom he is called upon to think of with interest. A distinct conception should be given (implicitly where it can, rather than explicitly) of the individual lamented.—But the writer of an epitaph is not an anatomist, who dissects the internal frame of the mind ; he is not even a painter, who executes a portrait at leisure and in entire tranquillity : his delineation, we must remember, is performed by the side of the grave ; and, what is more, the grave of one whom he loves and admires. What purity and brightness is that virtue clothed in, the image of which must no longer bless our living eyes ! The character of a deceased friend or beloved kinsman is not seen, nor ought to be seen, otherwise than as a tree through a tender haze or a luminous mist, that spiritualises and beautifies it ; that takes away, indeed, but only to the end that the parts which are not abstracted may appear

more dignified and lovely ; may impress and affect the more. Shall we say, then, that this is not truth, not a faithful image ; and that, accordingly, the purposes of commemoration cannot be answered ?—It *is* truth, and of the highest order ; for, though doubtless things are not apparent which did exist ; yet, the object being looked at through this medium, parts and proportions are brought into distinct view which before had been only imperfectly or unconsciously seen : it is truth hallowed by love—the joint offspring of the worth of the dead and the affections of the living ! This may easily be brought to the test. Let one, whose eyes have been sharpened by personal hostility to discover what was amiss in the character of a good man, hear the tidings of his death, and what a change is wrought in a moment ! Enmity melts away ; and, as it disappears, unsightliness, disproportion, and deformity, vanish ; and, through the influence of commiseration, a harmony of love and beauty succeeds. Bring such a man to the tombstone on which shall be inscribed an epitaph on his adversary, composed in the spirit which we have recommended. Would he turn from it as from an idle tale ? No ;—the thoughtful look, the sigh, and perhaps the involuntary tear, would testify that it had a sane, a generous, and good meaning ; and that on the writer's mind had remained an impression which was a true abstract of the character of the deceased ; that his gifts and graces were remembered in the simplicity in which they ought to be remembered. The composition and quality of the mind of a virtuous man, contemplated by the side of the grave where his body is mouldering, ought to appear,



and be felt as something midway between what he was on earth walking about with his living frailties, and what he may be presumed to be as a Spirit in heaven.

It suffices, therefore, that the trunk and the main branches of the worth of the deceased be boldly and unaffectedly represented. Any further detail, minutely and scrupulously pursued, especially if this be done with laborious and antithetic discriminations, must inevitably frustrate its own purpose ; forcing the passing Spectator to this conclusion,—either that the dead did not possess the merits ascribed to him, or that they who have raised a monument to his memory, and must therefore be supposed to have been closely connected with him, were incapable of perceiving those merits ; or at least during the act of composition had lost sight of them : for, the understanding having been so busy in its petty occupation, how could the heart of the mourner be other than cold ? and in either of these cases, whether the fault be on the part of the buried person or the survivors, the memorial is unaffecting and profitless.

Much better is it to fall short in discrimination than to pursue it too far, or to labour it unfeelingly. For in no place are we so much disposed to dwell upon those points, of nature and condition, wherein all men resemble each other, as in the temple where the universal Father is worshipped, or by the side of the grave which gathers all human Beings to itself, and ‘equalizes the lofty and the low.’ We suffer and we weep with the same heart ; we love and are anxious for one another in one spirit ; our hopes look to the same quarter ; and the virtues by which we are all to be furthered and supported, as

patience, meekness, good-will, justice, temperance, and temperate desires, are in an equal degree the concern of us all. Let an Epitaph, then, contain at least these acknowledgments to our common nature ; nor let the sense of their importance be sacrificed to a balance of opposite qualities or minute distinctions in individual character ; which if they do not, (as will for the most part be the case,) when examined, resolve themselves into a trick of words, will, even when they are true and just, for the most part be grievously out of place ; for, as it is probable that few only have explored these intricacies of human nature, so can the tracing of them be interesting only to a few. But an epitaph is not a proud writing shut up for the studious : it is exposed to all—to the wise and the most ignorant ; it is condescending, perspicuous, and lovingly solicits regard ; its story and admonitions are brief, that the thoughtless, the busy, and indolent, may not be deterred, nor the impatient tired : the stooping old man cons the engraven record like a second horn-book ;—the child is proud that he can read it ;—and the stranger is introduced through its mediation to the company of a friend : it is concerning all, and for all :—in the church-yard it is open to the day ; the sun looks down upon the stone, and the rains of heaven beat against it.

Yet, though the writer who would excite sympathy is bound in this case, more than in any other, to give proof that he himself has been moved, it is to be remembered, that to raise a monument is a sober and a reflective act ; that the inscription which it bears is intended to be permanent, and for universal perusal ; and that, for this

reason, the thoughts and feelings expressed should be permanent also—liberated from that weakness and anguish of sorrow which is in nature transitory, and which with instinctive decency retires from notice. The passions should be subdued, the emotions controlled; strong, indeed, but nothing ungovernable or wholly involuntary. Seemliness requires this, and truth requires it also: for how can the narrator otherwise be trusted? Moreover, a grave is a tranquillizing object: resignation in course of time springs up from it as naturally as the wild flowers, besprinkling the turf with which it may be covered, or gathering round the monument by which it is defended. The very form and substance of the monument which has received the inscription, and the appearance of the letters, testifying with what a slow and laborious hand they must have been engraven, might seem to reproach the author who had given way upon this occasion to transports of mind, or to quick turns of conflicting passion; though the same might constitute the life and beauty of a funeral oration or elegiac poem.

These sensations and judgments, acted upon perhaps unconsciously, have been one of the main causes why epitaphs so often personate the deceased, and represent him as speaking from his own tomb-stone. The departed Mortal is introduced telling you himself that his pains are gone; that a state of rest is come; and he conjures you to weep for him no longer. He admonishes with the voice of one experienced in the vanity of those affections which are confined to earthly objects, and gives a verdict like a superior Being, performing the office of a judge, who has no temptations to mislead

him, and whose decision cannot but be dispassionate. Thus is death disarmed of its sting, and affliction unsubstantialized. By this tender fiction, the survivors bind themselves to a sedater sorrow, and employ the intervention of the imagination in order that the reason may speak her own language earlier than she would otherwise have been enabled to do. This shadowy interposition also harmoniously unites the two worlds of the living and the dead by their appropriate affections. And it may be observed, that here we have an additional proof of the propriety with which sepulchral inscriptions were referred to the consciousness of immortality as their primal source.

I do not speak with a wish to recommend that an epitaph should be cast in this mould preferably to the still more common one, in which what is said comes from the survivors directly ; but rather to point out how natural those feelings are which have induced men, in all states and ranks of society, so frequently to adopt this mode. And this I have done chiefly in order that the laws, which ought to govern the composition of the other, may be better understood. This latter mode, namely, that in which the survivors speak in their own persons, seems to me upon the whole greatly preferable: as it admits a wider range of notices ; and, above all, because, excluding the fiction which is the groundwork of the other, it rests upon a more solid basis.

Enough has been said to convey our notion of a perfect epitaph ; but it must be borne in mind that one is meant which will best answer the *general* ends of that species of composition. According to the course pointed

out, the worth of private life, through all varieties of situation and character, will be most honourably and profitably preserved in memory. Nor would the model recommended less suit public men, in all instances save of those persons who by the greatness of their services in the employments of peace or war, or by the surpassing excellence of their works in art, literature, or science, have made themselves not only universally known, but have filled the heart of their country with everlasting gratitude. Yet I must here pause to correct myself. In describing the general tenour of thought which epitaphs ought to hold, I have omitted to say, that if it be the *actions* of a man, or even some *one* conspicuous ~~or~~ beneficial act of local or general utility, which have distinguished him, and excited a desire that he should be remembered, then, of course, ought the attention to be directed chiefly to those actions or that act : ~~and~~ such sentiments dwelt upon as naturally arise out of them or it. Having made this necessary distinction, I proceed.—The mighty benefactors of mankind, as they are not only known by the immediate survivors, but will continue to be known familiarly to latest posterity, do not stand in need of biographic sketches, in such a place ; nor of delineations of character to individualize them. This is already done by their Works, in the memories of men. Their naked names, ~~and~~ a grand comprehensive sentiment of civic gratitude, patriotic love, or human admiration—or the utterance of some elementary principle most essential in the constitution of true virtue ;—or a declaration touching that pious humility and self-abasement, which are

ever most profound as minds are most susceptible of genuine exaltation—or an intuition, communicated in adequate words, of the sublimity of intellectual power;—these are the only tribute which can here be paid—the only offering that upon such an altar would not be unworthy.

‘ What needs my Shakspeare for his honoured bones  
The labour of an age in piled stones,  
Or that his hallowed reliques should be hid  
Under a star y-pointing pyramid?  
Dear Son of Memory, great Heir of Fame,  
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?  
Thou in our wonder and astonishment  
Hast built thyself a livelong monument,  
And so sepulchred, in such pomp dost lie,  
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.’

Page 206. Line 3.

*“ And spires whose ‘ silent finger points to Heaven.’ ”*

An instinctive taste teaches men to build their churches in flat countries with spire-steeple, which as they cannot be referred to any other object, point as with silent finger to the sky and stars, and sometimes, when they reflect the brazen light of a rich though rainy sunset, appear like a pyramid of flame burning heaven-ward. See “ The Friend,” by S. T. Coleridge, No. 14, p. 223.

Page 273. Line 9.

*‘ That Sycamore, which annually holds  
Within its shade as in a stately tent.’*

*‘ This Sycamore oft musical with Bees ;  
Such Tents the Patriarchs loved.’*

*S. T. Coleridge.*

Page 286. Line 5.

*‘ Perish the roses and the flowers of Kings.’*

The ‘Transit gloria mundi’ is finely expressed in the Introduction to the Foundation-charters of some of the ancient Abbeys. Some expressions here used are taken from that of the Abbey of St. Mary’s Furness, the translation of which is as follows :—

*‘ Considering every day the uncertainty of life, that the roses and flowers of Kings, Emperors, and Dukes, and the crowns and palms of all the great, wither and decay ; and that all things, with an uninterrupted course, tend to dissolution and death : I therefore,’ &c.*

Page 295. Line 9.

*‘ Earth has lent  
Her waters, Air her breezes.’*

In treating this subject, it was impossible not to recollect, with gratitude, the pleasing picture, which, in his Poem of the Fleece,

the excellent and amiable Dyer has given of the influences of manufacturing industry upon the face of this Island. He wrote at a time when machinery was first beginning to be introduced, and his benevolent heart prompted him to augur from it nothing but good. Truth has compelled me to dwell upon the baneful effects arising out of an ill-regulated and excessive application of powers so admirable in themselves.

Page 325. Line 25.

*‘ Binding herself by Statute.’*

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